

ELLSBERG: STRATEGIC BOMBING

LAMA: 7/22/83

The question in my mind in 1960 and 1961, as I was first looking at the thermonuclear war plans of the U.S., was how did we get here? How could Americans, how could humans, have made plans like these? Our predicament is not merely the existence of these weapons and the possibility of accidental use. It is something that goes very deep into the metaphysics of what it means to be human and into the politics of the societies in which we live (not only our own). Our predicament has to do with the readiness, the willingness, the intentions of human leaders to contemplate and prepare to use these weapons on human beings as a deliberate instrument of policy.

I have not found that any of these leaders wants such a war to occur or looks forward to it or takes any pleasure in the expected effects. They do, however, want to threaten such a course of action for a great variety of reasons of policy. Not all of these look terribly important to our own eyes. And for that reason, they've tended not to let constituents know about the real purposes for which they make these threats or preparations, the occasions on which they have made all such threats, or their own knowledge of the effects of nuclear conflict, if they came to carrying out their threats.

The American nation, our leadership, played an enormous role even before Hiroshima in propelling the world toward this situation. And our leaders have used these weapons a dozen

times or more since Hiroshima: used them the way you use a gun when you point it at somebody's head, whether or not you pull the trigger. You are using the gun if you are making demands from behind the barrel. The best use, indeed, is to get your way without having to pull the trigger; but you are preparing yourself in fact to pull the trigger. Our leaders have accepted that possibility for us. However, I see it as hopeful that they have not believed they could tell us exactly what they were doing and what they were threatening, because they were not sure we would support them.

Some say -- with Ram Dass -- that the American people have known in their hearts all that is needed to be known about this situation, but they have resisted hearing about it. They believe that Cap Weinberger is in fact doing exactly what we want him to do, although we prefer not to hear the gory details. This theory implies that if we all knew what is happening, we would still go along with it, although with a heavier heart and more feeling of culpability.

I don't believe that is true. I think it's been important to keep Americans from knowing what our policies have been and what their actual effects really are. If people are informed, many of them will resist. I have believed that for many years. As Americans learn more, they are acting.

What is involved at the lowest level is ^{planning to} killing very ^{under certain circumstances} large numbers of noncombatants; women, children, sick, injured, old people, workers of all kinds; not just factory workers, not just those involved in war work, but dairymen,

laundresses^{esses}, farmers -- everyone. To kill indiscriminately and in very large numbers, hundreds of thousands, millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions^{of humans}. These threats are made with the awareness that they may have to be carried out. To make the threats credible, preparations are made which may not be reversible if the threats fail to achieve their aim.

War has not always meant what it has come to mean in thermonuclear war planning -- deliberate preparations for massacre, for the annihilation of civilians. The Just War doctrine, originating at the time of the Christian collaboration with the empire of Constantine, was the notion that some wars could be participated in as a matter of self defense by Christians. However, not all violence was considered acceptable even in self defense, even in wars that were otherwise justifiable. The key restraint was the absolute immunity of noncombatants, broadly interpreted as people who were not actually carrying a weapon. This is expressed today, in part, in our prisoner of war rules. If an armed soldier lays down his weapon and raises his hands, from that moment on to kill him is murder under both civil and military law. If he presents himself for your care as a prisoner, he then becomes immune from execution just for being a soldier. That is supposed to apply to civilians all the more.

Catholic doctrine, elaborated first by St. Augustine and then others, had become the heart of international law by the last decade of the 19th century. It was reiterated before World War II and afterwards in the Geneva and Hague Conven-

tions on the rules of war. These have been ratified by our own country as recently as the late 70's. They all incorporate this ^{central} notion of the absolute immunity of civilians from deliberate attack. ~~although~~ ^{in fact,} this was, blatantly ignored in the bombing campaigns against cities by Germans, British and Americans in World War II, which were the forerunner to nuclear war plans ever since. Yet in principle, what is legally and morally allowed in warfare is to attack only armed combatants ^{and military facilities.} What happened to this principle?

What happened, to begin with, was that in World War I thirteen million armed soldiers died, thirteen million out of sixty-five million soldiers. Relatively few civilians were killed by shot or shell, although many died from disease and starvation.

Airmen flying over the trenches looked down on armies at Flanders Fields where hundreds of thousands of men were dying month after month in mud that could not be traversed. (Nobody at the staff headquarters went down to the battlefields to discover that the dikes had been broken by artillery fire, the field had been turned to mud and the men couldn't move; they were sending them forward against the machine guns to die in vast numbers.) Those who viewed such scenes lost the moral distinction in their minds between combatants and noncombatants. It seemed to them, with reason, that what they were seeing was a massacre, indiscriminate destruction. Many were no longer convinced that civilians should be absolutely immune while soldiers -- young men just recently drafted from civilian

lives -- bore all the brunt of warfare. They thought there had to be a better way to fight wars. Many others, at home, drew a pacifist lesson: war itself had become obsolete, illegitimate. But those who saw war as inevitable concluded that there had to be a different way to conduct it, one that would achieve a decisive result with less killing.

Lord Trenchard, ^{later} Chief of the British Air Staff, believed that the way to do it was to use the ability of the airplane to fly over the barbed wire and over the armies, hitting the cities from which the armies were being directed -- the capital cities, the industrial cities. He believed that by attacking those cities directly, such panic would be created in the civilian population, such demoralization and chaos, that the leaders would not be able to carry on a war. The war would be over quickly and decisively. Of course both sides could do that, but the side that managed to do it first would effectively destroy the other's ability to fight.

The concept here was that by deliberately killing relatively few civilians, by breaching the prevailing code which had been enshrined for hundreds of years, you would vanquish the enemy with much less loss of life. The overall toll would be far less. It seemed to the airmen a humane concept.

There was a self-serving motivation as well. The airmen loved to fly. They loved airplanes. They wanted more airplanes and ^{--like any organization men--} they wanted a bigger Air Force. So they enthusiastically embraced the theory that a war could be won very quickly simply by switching from targetting the armed forces

in the battleships and the ^{on the fields} ~~field~~ to aerial bombing of the capitol and major cities. The Air Force's key role in implementing such a strategy gave it a claim for greater independence from the Army and Navy, which was perceived as the necessary condition for budgetting and creating a suitably large air service. All this depended on eroding the psychological/political/moral barriers to the targetting of civilians. In the cauldron of World War II, this was accomplished.

The current nuclear weapons on all sides are built to implement similar plans. These plans reflect a strategy of war fighting that did not start with the atom bomb at Hiroshima, but rather in the minds of those men flying over the trenches or working in air staffs in 1914-18. Three men stand out: an Italian named Douhet, Trenchard of Great Britain, and Billy Mitchell in the United States. Independently, though in some contact with each other, they created a doctrine for ^{how} ~~how~~ bombers ~~could be used~~ to decisive effect in war, the Strategic Bombing Doctrine. "Strategic" meant to them bombing well behind the front lines, basically upon cities -- a shift from tactical military targets. It's a euphemism for bombing cities. It also means very long-range operations (such as intercontinental bombing). The purpose of it is to destroy cities: city-busting.

The Strategic Bombing Doctrine -- how to win a war through airpower -- is well described as a dogma or cult. I lived with it for some years working as an Air Force consultant. The doctrine incorporates beliefs not only about what

you are allowed to do, which is to bomb civilians, but also specific theories on how to do it. Mainly: do it fast.

Shock effect is needed to end the war quickly, so use all your bombers at once, ^{missing them for maximum effect over one target at a time.} Don't prolong the campaign, don't worry about fighters and anti-aircraft fire. Enough bombers will get through.

None of this worked out in World War II. The actual results of the bombing proved almost every element of this dogma false. A key belief was that civilian morale would quickly crack. This reflected the military man's contempt for civilians -- the belief that the morale of soldiers would hold up under fire but the civilians would run for cover and demand an end to the war. That didn't happen anywhere. Yet this idea was still alive in 1969 when Henry Kissinger called for plans for a "massive, savage blow" against North Vietnam. His assistants, who had worked under Johnson, told him that we already had dropped one and a half times the bomb tonnage of World War II on North Vietnam and Vietnam; and they had not cracked. How would this do it? Kissinger retorted, "You are trying to tell me that this is the first people in history who have no breaking point." ~~This was~~ An odd and uninformed observation, because no people in history had ever exhibited a breaking point under bombing. Nobody.

When reports came in that whole German cities were being destroyed, the British Air Secretary or Churchill would always answer that the Air Force did not target civilians directly. "Our targets are military bases, ports, war factories. In-

evitably and unavoidably some of our bombs miss their targets. It is unfortunate. We do our best."

This was a lie. The lie persisted throughout the war in both Britain and America. The British Air Ministry believed that if the truth came out, the Archbishop of Canterbury, ^{among others,} would denounce the operation and hurt the morale of the bombing crews. This was likewise the ^{concern} ease in America.

What was being done? At first an attempt was made to target factories by daylight. This was before airborne radar. The British found that German fighters and anti-aircraft took too great a toll. Moreover, they couldn't hit the factories accurately, especially under fire.

By mid-1940, the British had been pushed off the continent and had no other way than bombing of carrying the war to Europe. They also wanted to convince America to enter the fray, in part by showing that they were still an ally worthy of support.

To survive in the air, they had to bomb at night. But the only target pilots could locate at night -- they discovered by late '41 -- was a city. So they proceeded with indiscriminate city bombings in the spirit of the strategic doctrine. ^{Non - having found the city - could they manage to hit it at night to} ^{smaller than} ^{more suggestively,} ^{2nd} ^{of the city} ^{itself.} ^{hit anything.} ^{a large target} ^{On sometimes, "collateral bombing."} ^{They called it "area bombing"} As General LeMay, creator and Chief of the Strategic Air Command, once put it to Sam Cohen (a RAND colleague of mine who later became known as the "father of the neutron bomb"): "War is killing people. When you kill enough people, the other side quits."

Nighttime bombing was euphemistically called area bombing

-- or sometimes, a little more ^{suggestively,} accurately, terror bombing or obliteration bombing. The built-up areas of workers' housing were targeted -- not because they were workers particularly, but because the houses were smaller and closer together. It was harder to miss ^{a house,} as you might if you aimed at the ^{wealthier} suburbs. So they struck the most dense areas, those most conducive to spreading fires.

Fire, not high explosive, turned out to be the way to kill the most people. And the way to create real havoc was to harness forces of nature -- winds -- to magnify the effects of incendiary bombs. By creating a fire storm, you could kill the maximum number of people. A fire storm consists of fire so widespread that the rising heat creates low pressure and brings in winds from the surrounding area which feed the fire and make it hotter. A circle of total destruction is created. The fire gets stronger and hotter and creates an updraft, turning the entire area into a furnace. At that point nothing will survive. The temperature of the fire ~~typically~~ reaches 1400 degrees Fahrenheit. Even the people in shelters were all either ^{baked} ~~burned~~ or asphyxiated, because the oxygen had been consumed.

This effect was first achieved at Hamburg, and later at Dresden.* Various aspects to the operation had to be refined by trial and error. They had discovered, for instance, that if you put enough high-explosive bombs in with the thermite incendiary bombs, and if you made them look alike, people would be deterred from dousing the thermite bombs with sand in the early moments when they could easily be put out. Then the fire would get so hot that you couldn't put it out. Also, they used delayed action bombs to intimidate firemen and prevent them from entering burning buildings. And they dropped the bombs over a wide ^{area} ~~range~~, not over a concentrated zone, to get so many fires started simultaneously that the fire departments couldn't cope with them all, causing them to spread widely.

Yet this tactic was not ending the war. In fact, German production rose higher and higher until late 1944. The theory that the civilians would crack was simply wrong; the notion that the industry would crack was equally wrong. In fact, every aspect of the theory was wrong. But in the absence of an alternative, the British kept doing it.

* "We killed altogether about 400,000 Germans, one third of them in the two fire storms in Hamburg and Dresden. The Dresden fire storm was the worst. But from our point of view it was only a fluke. We attacked Berlin sixteen times with the same kind of force that attacked Dresden once. We were trying every time to raise a fire storm. There was nothing special about Dresden except that for once everything worked as we intended. It was like a hole in one in a game of golf. Unfortunately, Dresden had little military importance, and anyway the slaughter came too late to have any serious effect on the war." Freeman Dyson, Disturbing the Universe (New York, 1979) p. 28.

Eventually the United States turned to area bombing as well, after experiencing heavy losses and low accuracy in daylight "precision" bombing. Our one raid over Berlin in February 1945 killed 25,000 people, almost as many as died in the entire London blitz over a six-month period. For every ton of bombs dropped on Britian during the war, we and the British dropped ^{over} 100 tons on Germany. Nonetheless, the allies were not winning through airpower alone. The destruction wasn't sufficient.

General LeMay, who was put in charge of the bombing of Japan, concluded that bombing industrial targets ^{there} was not effective. ~~at all. His planes couldn't hit them.~~ Instead, we should try area bombing, as we were beginning to do in Germany. But he thought that it had not been inflicted on a sufficiently large scale. So he adopted what is known in the Air Force as the most courageous command decision ever.

Without fully telling his superiors of his radical departure, he gambled that the Japanese air defenses at low altitude were ineffectual. He concluded that his pilots might not get any flak, that they would be too low for enemy fighters to shoot them down. Therefore they could afford to dispense with guns. He ordered the machine guns removed from the aircraft. The pilots were only informed of this the day of their mission. They were afraid many of them would be lost.

He put every reserve bomber in the air, 325 bombers in all. Moreover, they were to attack individually; they were not to convoy. By not going up high, by not convoying and not

carrying guns, they could save fuel. This gave them room for additional thermite bombs. LeMay himself decided how many high explosives to put in, what areas to target. He was not able to go aloft because he might have been captured, and he alone knew of the super bomb to come.

The night raid on Tokyo was a great success. Only 14 bombers out of the 325 were lost. They burned out sixteen square miles of the city. They created what was called a "sweep conflagration," a moving fire storm pushed along by a ground wind. A tidal wave of fire sixty feet high formed, its heat so intense that its infrared radiation killed people hundreds of feet ahead of the fire.

140,000 people died that night, March 9th, 1945. That's as many as died in both Nagasaki and Hiroshima from the immediate effects of the atom bomb, although more died later. A comparable number died in Dresden that same month from a similar attack by British and American forces. Those who had taken refuge in shelters were asphyxiated. The heavy bombers were thrown thousands of feet upward by the huge updrafts.

Tokyo is crisscrossed with canals, like Venice. So mothers took their children out of the shelters to escape the heat, hurrying through the streets to the canals. The sweep conflagration reached a temperature of 1700 degrees Fahrenheit. Asphalt on the streets was melting, boiling and burning. Families jumped into the canals to find relief, but the canals were boiling. Tens of thousands of people boiled

to death.*

Having been so successful, LeMay targeted the next eighteen cities in order of population. He attacked one city after another, and hit Tokyo again.*

When Truman and Stimson say in their memoirs that they felt no moral issue was involved in dropping the bomb on Hiroshima, their explanation is that they knew we were already killing many more people with incendiary bombing. The atomic bomb, as they saw it, might actually stop that and save Japanese and American lives. The point here is that the bomb was developed to implement more effectively a strategy which was already being carried out. The strategy did not come after the bomb; the strategy preceded the bomb.

The bomb was a more effective tool for a conscious, deliberate strategy of annihilation. It enabled the Air Force to do with one bomb what it otherwise took hundreds of bombers to accomplish. But we had hundreds of bombers and we were using them night after night, long before the atom bomb was dropped.

In 1942 the British and American civilian leaderships had rejected the constraints of the Just War Doctrine without ever telling their countrymen, in effect putting themselves beyond international law. They invented a new code as to what was permissible for heads of state. They secretly but consciously adopted massacre from the air as an instrument of national policy.

* Martin Caidin, A Torch to the Enemy: The Fire Raid on Tokyo (New York, 1960). Also: General Curtis LeMay and MacKinley Kantor, Mission With LeMay (New York, 1965).

No other country has ever attempted to win a war by aerial bombing, as our Air Force did, or believed it had ended a war by bombing, as we imagine about Japan. Because of World War II, American leaders regard methods of widespread annihilation as legitimately available and effective, to be developed technologically for a wide range of purposes. That is an element of the predicament the world is in now.

In the eyes of the rest of the world, we and the British are "the bombers." ^{Americans} ~~We~~ have acquired an unusual ^{national} belief, a faith in the usefulness and the acceptability and the legitimacy of annihilation from the air. No other country has gone so far to build into its own military institutions such a belief. *In the nuclear era, it has made us peculiarly dangerous.*

In 1961 I wrote the official policy guidance for the United States general nuclear war plans. More specifically, I was given the job of drafting the new Kennedy administration's official, top secret guidelines for the annual operational plans for general nuclear war. Secretary McNamara issued my draft guidelines to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as his directive. I had been given this task because, from earlier work on command and control, I knew more about nuclear war plans than any other civilian in the country.

In the Eisenhower era the plans for war with Soviet troops were nothing but general nuclear war plans. They were also first-strike plans. We were not planning to begin a conflict, by a nuclear attack or otherwise. But there was, by directive, no planning for any limited conflict with Russians, either non-nuclear or nuclear. If we found ourselves in an armed conflict with the Soviet Union, anywhere in the world, whatever the origins of the conflict, our plans called for the U.S. to initiate an all-out use of nuclear weapons from the outset.

In effect Eisenhower had generalized the challenge to us in Berlin, where our troops were surrounded and outnumbered, and applied it to the world scene. He thought we couldn't afford to confront the Soviets or Chinese anywhere, with their resources and manpower, without relying on our superiority in nuclear weapons. To do that we had to retain our lead in nuclear weapons, and we had to be prepared to use them first, in an all-out attack, since Eisenhower believed that any more limited use of nuclear weapons against Soviet units was certain to escalate to all-out war eventually anyhow.

We had been on the verge of using nuclear weapons in combat more often than most Americans know.* Since none of the immediate targets were Soviet troops, the proposed attacks involved initially limited numbers of tactical nuclear weapons. We secretly offered to give France atomic bombs on behalf of their tro

* See Daniel Ellsberg, "Call to Mutiny," Introduction to Protest and Survive, ed. E.P. Thompson and Dan Smith (New York, 1981), for examples, discussion and references.

trapped at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Eisenhower used secret nuclear threats, and meant them, to end fighting in Korea in 1953, and to defend Chinese nationalist troops on the island of Quemoy in the Taiwan Straits crisis in 1958. These threats, obviously, were no secret to Peking, but the American public was told nothing. ⁷ In most of these cases our government concluded these threats had been successful, which is why ~~the~~ ^{such} threats kept getting made. The French rejected our offer, for fear of the consequences, but in Korea and Quemoy, and later in Berlin and Cuba, the other side did appear to back down. ⁸ Our nuclear threats may or may not, in fact, have been critical to their behavior, but it was not unreasonable for our leaders to infer that they were. In strategic nuclear terms, our opponents were essentially unarmed facing the United States. There was no comparison between their nuclear delivery capabilities and ours. On the other hand, we were never completely certain they would back down. And if the Soviets had retaliated at all to our attacks on their allies, we would have carried out our general war plans.

I drafted a question for Kennedy to ask the Joint Chiefs as to what ^{one of} the effects would be ^{on the ~~enemy~~ ~~target~~ ~~population~~} if they carried out the standing plan, the Eisenhower version of an American first strike: *Namely* "How many people would be killed in Russia and China?" I ~~had~~ ^{had} proposed ^{that he} ~~him~~ ask that question in ^{my} ~~the~~ belief that they did not have an answer. I had never come across such a calculation. It was my impression they'd never bothered to calculate how many civilians would be killed. How many targets would be de-

stroyed, yes; how many planes, how many cities, how much oil, and so forth, yes. But I had never seen a calculation of how many people we would kill. And I didn't think they had one. I thought that if they had to admit that -- or if they improvised an implausibly low figure -- we would have had a good bureaucratic context in which to move them toward our proposals, toward less rigid and brutal plans.

But to my surprise, they did have an answer. The answer was 325,000,000 dead.

So they knew. ~~The Chiefs~~ ^{P They} sent over a chart based on a computer print-out of how many would die month by month, from the initial effects and from fallout. Because of the way I had framed the question, their answer covered only deaths in Russia and China. So then we asked how many would die elsewhere, ^{and they told us.} Another hundred million were expected to die in East Europe, and more than that in West Europe from Soviet retaliation. With deaths in neutrals and the Far East, the total death-toll from early effects would not have been less than 600 million.

Q: That's using all that they had, all the arsenals?
~~Demanded Ball has requested to this day.~~

DE: Yes, as was built into the plans, which used essentially every weapon we had. ^P These plans foresaw our destroying inadvertently, by fallout alone, most of the population of Finland. Our bombing of Leningrad would unavoidably wipe out Finland. The same was true for Austria, Yugoslavia,

They called for hitting every city in Russia and China. (This was whether or not China had been a party to the dispute that led to carrying out these plans. There were no plans for fighting Russians, 17 that did not call for simultaneously attacking Chinese cities. The U.S. Government still believed in a "was a little encephalogram...")

Afghanistan, Japan, Pakistan -- all of these on or near the Russian border. Fallout carried by prevailing winds would annihilate these countries even if they weren't involved in the war at all, even if not a single warhead landed on them directly. Our allies would also be destroyed by Russian retaliation. Immediate deaths would have totaled 600,000,000 to 800,000,000, 15 to 20% of the earth's population, with a good likelihood over time of another 20% perishing. We're talking not about the consequences of a meteor or natural disaster but of annihilation by human design -- the sun's energy drawn to the earth's surface and deliberately inflicted on other humans. ^{Six hundred} 600 million engineered deaths, nearly all civilians: 100 Nazi holocausts.

For nearly twenty-five years now I've been circling the question I posed earlier: How did Americans -- colleagues of mine, the colonels I worked with and drank beer with after work -- how did human beings come to make plans like these, knowing these consequences if their preparations were ever carried out? Questions are raised about our species, let alone about our nation and our officials: Who are these guys, and what are they up to? How did we get to this? How did any humans come to think they had a right to plan and threaten and prepare acts of annihilation on this scale?

~~moral implications of an Auschwitz.~~

~~Part of the answer has already been suggested.~~

~~Perhaps we can begin to see, in human terms, the outlines of the process that brought us where we are.~~ Hoping to avoid the battlefield slaughter and stalemate of World War I, allied leaders early in World War II secretly renounced the constraints of Just War Doctrine and international law. They secretly adopted instead Hitler's ethics of power and total war, as expressed in the bombing of Rotterdam and London and then, a hundredfold, in the firestorms kindled in Hamburg, Cologne, Dresden and Tokyo. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, war-planning in the postwar period simply continued with the same sorts of targets and tactics, but with the addition of atomic bombs.

In the late-Forties, atom bombs were relatively small and not very numerous. A few hundred A-bombs did not, in fact, change the casualty estimates from the historical experience of the previous war. Ten to twenty million dead ^{was} as a typical estimate in the early Fifties. As Edward Teller has often observed, that is "a tragic prospect ... but, even if deterrence fails, no worse than World War II." And that was true. It was not a prospect to set off moral alarms in the minds of American war planners (who remembered World War II in terms of success, however tragic the costs).

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... to understand the physical possibility of casualty figures on the scale of half a billion people, we must recognize another turning-point in the mid-Fifties: the shift in strategic inventories and targetting plans from A-bombs to H-bombs.

This shift started about ten years after World War II had ended, in the second decade of the nuclear era. Since then, cities on both sides have been threatened not by the kind of ~~atomic~~ "atomic" weapons that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki — "A-bombs," uranium and plutonium fission weapons, but by thermonuclear fusion weapons, "hydrogen" or H-bombs. These are weapons each of which requires for its detonation a Nagasaki-type A-bomb as its trigger.

Some H-bomb warheads (on Soviet missiles) have an explosive power equivalent to 20 million tons of TNT: two million times the power of the largest block-busters of World War II, one thousand times the yield of the Nagasaki bomb. *That is ten times the total tonnage of explosive-power bombs dropped by the U.S. in World War II.*

The U.S. dropped two million tons of TNT in all of World War II. The warhead of a single Titan II missile has a designed explosive yield of nine megatons, nine million tons of TNT: 4-1/2 World War IIs in one warhead. ^P Pictures of the destruction of Nagasaki reveal no more than the effects of dropping on a single populated city the detonator of one modern hydrogen weapon, of which tens of thousands now exist on both sides. Nowadays every bomber and every missile, with its multiple warheads, has the lethal capacity ^{(moral implications of 2nd} -- and thus the ^{Auschwitz} *to kill millions of humans*

(original 1971)

~~Then something else happened.~~ Between 1955 and 1960 we ^{P In short} retooled; we modernized. With little publicity, we put Teller's H-bombs in the bomb-bays -- replacing A-bombs -- and on top of missiles. And the secret estimates of planned

fatalities -- outside the awareness of most Pentagon planners, let alone the American public -- suddenly rose in the space of a few peacetime years by an order of magnitude, from tens of millions to hundreds of millions: a level of slaughter now far outside human experience. And almost no one -- I am suggesting -- noticed. Many laypersons, indeed, may have wrongly imagined that the casualty estimates were of that order all along. This simply means that they, too, missed the occurrence and the significance of the actual radical increase, which took place wholly outside the realm of public, democratic discussion and possible challenge.

[Subsequent to the Lama discussions, in the late fall of 1983, new scientific analyses have been published ~~in the late fall of 1983~~ that for the first time spell out a plausible sequence of consequences of a nuclear exchange (based on existing stock-piles) ~~that~~ ^{--which} could lead to the destruction of all organized

^{Earlier analyses, by failing to discover such a sequence or mechanism,} human life and perhaps all life on the entire planet. ~~The~~

^{had raised increasing doubt that one existed, or that such an outcome was a real,} main new calculation omitted from earlier analyses is the ^{possibility}

effect on regional and global weather patterns of soot from burning cities and forests. Such soot, ^{it turns out,} would be so dense,

widespread and long-lasting in the atmosphere that it would block sunlight long enough to interrupt food cycles and to lower the temperature of large regions by 30 to 40 degrees

Centigrade. Wind patterns would be changed, spreading the dense clouds of soot, enlarging the area of freezing cold and darkness, ^Y"nuclear winter," ^Yto hemispheric proportions.

Global wind patterns could even be so affected as to bring the induced "winter" down to the Southern Hemisphere, along with heavy fallout, from which the South was earlier thought to be largely exempt in the absence of direct attack.

At the least, these previously unforeseen effects would magnify greatly the immediate casualties from a large-scale nuclear exchange in the 1980's, from the level earlier calculated ~~at~~^{to be} about a billion fatalities and another billion injured. ^{— to much higher levels still.} Human population size "could be reduced to prehistoric levels or below." The probability that nuclear winter would lead to the extinction of most life on earth cannot be made precise, but it is not low. (See Anne Ehrlich, "Nuclear Winter," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, April, 1984; R.P. Turco, et al. (TTAPS), "Nuclear Winter: Global Consequences of Multiple Nuclear Explosions," Science, 222 (Dec. 23, 1983) pp. 1,283-92; P.R. Ehrlich and others, "Long-Term Biological Consequences of Nuclear War," Science, 222 (Dec. 23, 1983), pp. 1,293-1300.)

Several points missing from most ^{accounts} ~~discussion~~ of nuclear winter follow from the discussion in the text above. City-burning -- the fatal link to nuclear winter and possible extinction -- is a central feature of first-strike and pre-emptive planning, not just of retaliatory planning. This orientation is so deeply rooted in operational practice and institutional doctrine that it can not be easily or surely changed. And the initiative and energy for change will still have to come from outside the institutional planning and

decision-making apparatus. We cannot rely on officials who have threatened and prepared for more than a generation to exterminate half a billion humans "if necessary" in the interests of national security to be "radicalized" by the news of nuclear winter to the point of repudiating and undoing their own planning.

The analogy of nuclear winter to the World War II production of fire storms is noteworthy. What was discovered then was that by burning enough parts of a single city simultaneously, local wind-patterns could be changed so as to enlarge and intensify the zone of destruction. Now we find that by burning enough cities simultaneously -- an operation made possible by H-bombs and missiles -- regional, hemispheric and global wind-patterns can be harnessed to destructive effects that go beyond ^{almost} any previously imagined ~~by anyone other~~ than Herman Kahn.

One exception was the imagination of Herman Kahn, at the time a colleague of mine at Rand.
In the late Fifties Kahn introduced the notion of a

Doomsday Machine, a hypothetical device that would respond to specified "provocations" by destroying all life on earth. He correctly speculated that the mechanism would most likely involve "the creation of really large amounts of radioactivity or the causing of major climatic changes or ... the extreme use of thermal effects" (On Thermonuclear War, New York, 1960, p. 145). Less wisely, he concluded that no nation would build such a device inadvertently ("partly because it is hard to build one," p. 150), and that no such mechanism existed at that time -- 1960 -- nor could ~~one~~ be constructed for at least

a decade. "For at least the next decade or so, any picture of total world annihilation appears to be wrong, irrespective of the military course of events." (p. 22, italics in original).

In fact, such a mechanism may well have existed in his own country at the time he wrote. If the 1960 U.S. operational plan for general nuclear war had been carried out as planned, it would have corresponded to the best available current (1984) design for a Doomsday Machine. Calculations are not yet complete enough to say whether it surely would, or would not, have resulted in total extinction of life.]

Any leader commanding such weapons would prefer, of course, to get his way in a confrontation without having to detonate any of them in combat. Yet every President in the nuclear era (with the possible exception of Ford) has had occasion to contemplate seriously a possible imminent order to launch American nuclear weapons in an ongoing conflict: either to end a costly stalemate or to protect a sizeable American or allied tactical unit that was surrounded and in danger of being captured or overrun.* Not one has been willing to give up the explicit threat of possible U.S. first-use, neither in the NATO area nor in the rest of the world.

Every President, from Truman to Reagan, has taken expensive steps -- reluctantly or not in terms of his personal inclinations, which may have varied from one to another far more than have their actual programs and plans -- to maintain

* Ellsberg, op. cit.

the credibility of such nuclear threats. It is precisely in

hopes of restoring this credibility -- now greatly diminished by Soviet nuclear parity -- that the current Reagan administration proposes to spend several hundred billion dollars to develop, test, produce and deploy over ten thousand new nuclear weapons, many of them suitable only for striking first. Yet in a world where our major opponent is now comparably armed, and therefore much less likely than before to back down, such threats are not a substitute for nuclear war. They are a path to nuclear war.

In this light, long before the final, mutually disastrous breakdown, the very preparations by our society that point toward this ending involve us all right now in a moral catastrophe. Every new test of a nuclear weapon, on either side, is a rehearsal for a holocaust. ¶ The taxes we spend on such weapons, the talents and labor and resources we mobilize in order better to threaten or carry out the initiation of thermonuclear warfare, all express a willingness and a readiness to commit massacre. They reflect a provisional intent not merely to kill opposing leaders who fail to heed our threats, and their armed followers, but to annihilate their wives and children and elders and sick. We are preparing to exterminate, as well, their livestock, their birds and fish; to burn all their habitations and buildings; to poison their wells and fields and lakes; to set their forests blazing, with their wild animals; to freight their winds with radioactivity carrying death to neighboring lands -- "captive nations," neutrals, ^{and} our own allies; to leave no living things on earth

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unharmd, save wild grasses and insects, resistant to the radiation from our weapons.

Some questions such plans evoke may be seen as evolutionary, or ultimately as religious ones. What is the nature and role of the human species, large parts of which are now contemplating and readying this project of extermination? What is our relation and obligation to the rest of life? Is it our destiny to reverse the project of creation?

Indeed, what is the true religion of the men who made these first-strike plans and who believe they have the right to implement them under certain circumstances of enemy "provocation"? Do the rest of us share that same religion? If not, what are we called on to do?

In any Western religious terms, to carry out such plans would be evil, a sin. And their very existence -- even if their nominal function is to threaten or deter -- surely heightens the possibility that under some circumstances they will be carried out.

Every spiritual path is partly defined by some form of ethical considerations, and in particular, restraints on the circumstances and scale of permissible violence. It is not only Christian "just war" principles (and international law) that are violated by our current and past war plans, which threaten the deliberate annihilation of non-combatants on a scale with no precedent in human barbarism. These preparations do not fit within the broadest interpretation of any traditional system of ethics, whether Christian, Jewish,

Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, Islamic, animist ...

There are, indeed, elements within every religious tradition -- which in these circumstances demand rethinking! -- that foster compliance with state authority; but never to the point of envisioning collaboration with conscious preparations to launch a form of combat that would surely murder half a billion to a billion human beings, and that could end life on earth.

One could understand a religion with such an ethics only as a kind of Satanism, a worship of unbridled power that gives national leaders ^{the right?} to gamble with forces that can undo creation. Nationalistic homage to the state, the euphoria of identification with an all-powerful entity to which everything is permitted in the name of "national security," may well have come to this, in the minds of many of our leaders and large parts of the public. Yet to this day, the sustained conversion of highest civilian leaders to an official ethics that was new in World War II and borrowed secretly from our fascist adversaries, permitting deliberate threat and massacre of non-combatants as an instrument of state policy, has had to be kept secret from most American citizens. They -- we, most of us -- have not been trusted to go along with it.

Few Americans are pacifists. But even in the furnace of World War II and the ice-floes of the Cold War, their acceptance and worship of the power of absolutely unlimited violence have not kept pace with their leaders'. Our hope of salvation, in whatever sense, rests on that.

Compared with a few years ago, there are strong grounds for encouragement. The Freeze campaign, which seeks the attainable goal of a mutual, verifiable halt to the U.S./Soviet arms buildup, against the opposition of the President and in rejection of his pursuit of nuclear superiority and new first-strike weapons, is the most broadly supported in American history. It is based in part on the newly-emerging "gender gap," the disproportionate rejection by women of the warlike policies of this Administration and of the politics of machismo in general.

Perhaps most dramatic of all is the recent stand of the American Catholic hierarchy applying, at last, the Just War doctrine to nuclear weapons. Inevitably they have concluded that just war is impossible using nuclear weapons, that no using nuclear weapons is morally acceptable. In their Pastoral Letter on War and Peace (1983) the American Catholic bishops assert -- in flat, unequivocal rejection of NATO planning and U.S. "first-use" planning both for Europe and elsewhere, including "preemption" -- that "it would be morally unjustifiable to initiate nuclear war in any form," under any circumstances, including massive conventional assault in Europe. "Non-nuclear attacks by another state must be resisted by other than nuclear means."

City-busting, the heart of strategic bombing doctrine since it was conceived over sixty years ago, is identified as absolutely forbidden under any circumstances, including retaliation. "No Christian can rightfully carry out orders or

policies deliberately aimed at killing non-combatants." This applies, the bishops make clear, to attacks nominally directed to "military" targets in heavily populated areas, even if the effects on civilians were "only" "indirect" and "unintended." In the light of this statement, no Catholic may, on pain of mortal sin, participate in the planning or implementation of attacks on civilian populations, whether in a first strike or retaliation. This is potentially a call to mutiny to every Catholic in the Strategic Air Command. There has never been anything like it in our history. It merits the anguish that it is causing the Pentagon.

As a call to mutiny, it challenges not only Catholics, and not only members of the Armed Services. Americans in general are waking up to the moral implications of what we have been preparing to do, and are asking each other how we can work together to change the realities I have been describing. [#] I think that change is possible. I would not be doing almost anything of the things I do if I did not think so. No other government is so susceptible to citizen pressure. No other public has so strong a chance to change national policy as we do.

We do have the power as citizens to change this situation. Indeed, it is our leaders' knowledge of our potential power -- and of our basic sense, different from theirs, as to what is permitted for states to do and what is not -- that has led successive administrations of government officials to keep information on our planning, threats and potential consequences

secret from us. They fear our collective power and our intention not to be participants in processes of massacre.

But change will not come easily. It is not merely a problem of awakening our leaders, by a snap of the fingers, a few demonstrations, a letter to the editor or a poll, as if they ^{had} made a little mistake absentmindedly. To believe that would be to become quickly disillusioned; just as, during the Vietnam war, many people who thought that one or two more demonstrations surely ought to bring the President around became disheartened. No, these policies are more deeply rooted in American society than that. They are shaped in ways, and by purposes, that ~~are not easily dislodged, or even you won't easily figure out just~~ ^{recognized and understood.} ~~by yourself.~~ And It will take efforts that are out of the ordinary by more than a few of us, and personal changes in more than a few of us, to transform them. I think it will also help to know our hidden history, how we got where we are now; that's why I have been burdening you with such painful facts.

(cont. next page)→

¶ These policies, and the leaders who direct them, can and must be opposed without relying on violence. Violence would only confirm the very values and practices we must oppose; it would lead to their reinforcement. But even in America, with a tradition much stronger than elsewhere of tolerating heresy to the religion of state power, effective opposition to policies that have such strong institutional support and Presidential leadership cannot take place without personal risk: risk to relationships at work and in professions, to reputation, to careers, thus to income and family. And if not without risk, then not without personal courage.

For that we must draw on our deepest commitments, our sense of who we are and want to be, what purposes and values we wish to serve, our deepest and broadest loyalties. I believe we must seek to find and share with each other the political and spiritual truths and practices that will give us the strength to recall to ourselves and to our fellow Americans that to be loyal to this country does not compel us to be disloyal to the human species and to future life on this earth.



Q. You mentioned some of the subterfuge you were a victim of in your work earlier in life, and I wondered if that type of manipulation was used to excuse the use of a nuclear bomb against Japan. I remember that being justified by the number of lives it would save. I have always been opposed to that because I thought that even the war lords of Japan would take note of something as awesome as that if any kind of effort was made to encourage them to surrender before this bomb was dropped. I don't know if that was done, but I would like to know if I was manipulated as a young man.

DE: This was something I have followed closely, as new evidence began appearing from the early Sixties on, concerning the decision-making behind the bomb. I wondered: How and why did ^{Hiroshima} this happen? How did we come to do this? It turns out, as you suggest, that the answers have some similarities to the stories of strategic bombing, the missile gap, and our later nuclear war plans. In each case the perspectives of our leaders and ^{that of} the public were different, and they still are. There ^{was, therefore,} ^{official} the same need for secrecy, public ignorance, and lies.

The accounts by President Truman and Secretary of War Henry Stimson of their motives for dropping the bomb on Hiroshima were entirely misleading. Their public rationale was that they had aimed only to save American lives, by averting the need for an invasion of Japan that would otherwise have been essential to bring about a Japanese surrender. That was a valid description of official thinking early in 1945,

when it still wasn't clear when Japan could be brought to surrender, or what it would take to make them do so. At that time Soviet participation in the war against Japan was still regarded as essential.

But that was no longer true by mid-July (and doubtful as early as mid-June). If one looks at the actual decision-making -- as described in detail in Martin Sherwin's A World Destroyed -- one must conclude that for a number of weeks before August 6, 1945, the supposed need to use the bomb to avert an otherwise-inevitable invasion was no longer among the various reasons for dropping it.

By May and June of 1945, Japanese defeat was thorough, and Japanese morale had dropped precipitately as a result of the blockade and the fire-bombing. In mid-June the Japanese began seeking surrender terms through the Russians (who were still officially neutral in the Pacific war).

President Truman knew this in detail, from Japanese diplomatic messages that we intercepted, and from the Russians. He also knew that the single condition the Japanese were seeking -- the preservation of the emperor -- was one that he had already decided he was prepared to grant. (The Japanese, after the bombs were dropped, still asked for and were given this assurance before they surrendered.) None of the top military commanders or Service chiefs -- not, for example, Generals Arnold, Spaatz, or LeMay in the Air Force, Admirals King or Leahy, Army Generals Eisenhower, Marshall or MacArthur -- believed either at the time (after June) or after

the war, that the bomb was necessary to end the war before an invasion. Moreover, U.S. Intelligence estimated that Russia's entry into the war -- promised by Stalin for August 8 -- would dash Japanese hopes of using the Russians as an intermediary and shock them into immediate surrender.

Why, then, the pressure on the Manhattan Project to have the Bomb ready by "August 1" or as soon after as possible? That date had no relation to plans for the full invasion of Japan, which was scheduled for the spring of 1946. Nor did the urgency have much to do with the much smaller, earlier landing on Kyushu being prepared for November 1945, three months from August. Why not wait, at least, till after the Russian entry into the war on August 8-9, to test the prediction that that would be the catalyst for direct surrender approaches to the Americans by the Japanese? It is now clear, in part from the diaries of the highest participants, that the most immediate reason for the urgency was precisely to bring about a Japanese surrender before the Russian entry, or as soon thereafter as possible. And a second consideration was to intimidate the Soviet Union, to limit their ambitions in the postwar world.

Q: Why was the second bomb dropped on Nagasaki, especially so soon after Hiroshima?

DE: The second bomb was dropped, as early as August 9, for the very same reason that the first bomb was dropped as early

as August 6. As we now know from the Japanese minutes, the bombing of Hiroshima failed to have any dramatic effect on the Japanese deliberations. The Japanese military argued that the effect of the atom bomb was no greater than the effect of the fire raids that they had been experiencing for six months -- which was true. They even guessed correctly that the Americans had only a few of the new bombs. (We had a third due by the end of August.)

The news of the Soviet entry into Manchuria, in the early morning of August 9, came as a disheartening surprise to the War Cabinet. It led immediately to discussion of approaching the Americans directly for surrender terms. The word of the bombing of Nagasaki came later in that same meeting, and no doubt the combination reinforced the Emperor's decision to seek surrender terms immediately.

But from the American point of view, the goal of the second bomb, like that of the first, was to get a Japanese surrender as quickly as possible before the Soviets got far into Japanese territory in China, Manchuria or Korea. The further they went, the more claim they would have had to be included in the surrender and peace treaty negotiations and the subsequent occupation of Japan. (As it was, the war did end fast enough to exclude the Soviets from both, despite their combat role in Manchuria.) Since the Japanese didn't surrender on August 7 and the Soviet entry was expected on August 8, the second bomb was scheduled to be dropped as soon as weather permitted.

It so happens there was another major aim in dropping the bomb, which worked to exclude any of the alternative methods that had been proposed to get a quick surrender. Alternatives included, for instance, a clear warning at Potsdam in July of the nature of the bomb, or a demonstration on an unpopulated area, or an advance indication to the Japanese that the imperial institution could be retained, or warning at Potsdam of the impending Soviet entry. The new Secretary of State, James Byrnes along with Stimson hoped that the bomb would strengthen our hand in negotiations with the Soviets over the future of Europe and improve our whole postwar power relationship with the Soviets. There are indications that they believed that for maximum "psychological" effect along these lines, it was essential to demonstrate to the Russians not just that we possessed this new weapon but that we were willing to use it, on people. It was to be, in effect, not just the last show in World War II but the first shot in the Cold War.

At any rate, that was the signal the Soviet leadership got, and it was probably intended. They knew as well as we did that the bombs were not needed for military reasons, to bring about a surrender without an invasion. They were intercepting some of the same Japanese diplomatic traffic, and sharing the messages with us. So they knew we knew that they knew: that our public rationale for the bombing was invalid; and that our purposes, by the time the bombs were actually ready to be used, must essentially be limited to impressing the Soviets and limiting their postwar role in the Far East.

When they saw us drop the two bombs anyway -- bracketing their entry into the war and totally obscuring its impact in the eyes of most of the world -- they understood it mainly as a blunt private message to them: namely, "It doesn't take a whole lot to get us to drop this thing on a city; it doesn't take the need to end a war or to avert an invasion, as we're telling the rest of the world, or the prospect of saving a million American lives. You know better than that. You can best figure why we're doing this, and who else we might be prepared to use it on, and how much provocation it might take."

According to David Holloway, a major scholar of the Soviet nuclear and thermonuclear program, Stalin did not immediately accelerate the Soviet nuclear program when he was told at Potsdam of the successful test of the new weapon, though he knew exactly what Truman meant. It was only when we actually used it to obliterate Hiroshima, a few weeks later, that Stalin suddenly elevated the Russian program to the highest priority, putting it on three shifts, 24 hours a day.

Stalin didn't, in fact, make any of the concessions regarding East Europe that Byrnes had hoped for when he went to negotiate with the bomb (as he put it to Stimson) "in his pocket." But Stalin had got the message. He was properly impressed.

And ... here we are.

Q: If Roosevelt hadn't died

DE: Roosevelt's plan had been to use the bomb from the very beginning. As Stimson says, there was never any consideration given to not using the bomb, to keep it solely as a deterrent. It was always assumed that it would be used as soon as available. And as early as 1943, the target was Japan. The war in Europe was expected to be over before the A-bomb would be ready to use. (The war in Germany actually lasted some months longer than expected. The Battle of the Bulge prolonged it by several months.) So from '43 on, plans for using the bomb focused on Japan -- in terms of where the operational base would be, what bombing units would be used, and so on. In other words, it was planned from the beginning for use against an opponent known, or believed, to have no nuclear program of its own.

I had grown up assuming that the bomb had been designed only to deter the Nazis from using such a weapon, if they should acquire it. For many of the scientists involved, this was true. But it turns out that Roosevelt, Groves and Stimson had a different understanding from early on.

Let me ask this question: How many people here have the impression there was better than a 50% chance that if the war had gone on another six months to a year, Germany would have had a nuclear bomb? Most of you. ~~How many do not? Just a few, I see.~~ That's what I supposed. It's wrong.

I have found with young audiences, too, something very interesting. Even though all this was before they were born, ~~I have found that~~ most young people have an answer to that, to what might seem a rather esoteric historical question. They

almost all think, as you do, that Germany was just on the verge of producing a bomb. That's how they have grown up understanding it. It's a national fallacy.

Q: What about the letter that Einstein wrote? And Germany's heavy water program?

DE: Young people have heard about the heavy water production, too. Even more esoteric! First, let me say that the fission of uranium was discovered in Germany in 1938 by Hahn. Most of the world's nuclear scientists at that time were in Germany. The evidence then suggested that the Germans would be ahead in developing nuclear capability. This likelihood declined markedly when a lot of their Jewish nuclear scientists were expelled and came over to the States. But Germany still retained some very good non-Jewish scientists, like Heisenberg and others. They had the theoretical capability to do it. That's why ^ES^Eilard drafted the letter for Einstein to send to Roosevelt in 1939, proposing research on a bomb. (^ES^Eilard's chauffeur on that visit was Edward Teller.)

There's a scholarly book by David Irving on the German nuclear energy program called ^{The German Atomic Bomb [New York, 1968].} ~~The Virus House~~ (the German code name for their research institute). It turns out that the Germans never launched a ^(crash) ~~Bomb~~ ^(aimed at production operations) project, like our Manhattan ^{design and production of an atomic bomb,} Project that started in 1942. They were parallel to us in research from the time of the Einstein letter till 1942, doing theoretical work to see whether a Bomb was feasible. In June

'42 we started our Manhattan Project to design an operational Bomb, with meetings first at Princeton and then later at Los Alamos and Chicago. The practical problems included devising ways to obtain enough plutonium and uranium, finding out how to explode a Bomb, and the actual engineering and production of the Bomb.

At the same point in 1942, the Germans decided not to proceed with a Bomb program. They decided they couldn't finish it in time. They still held some hope of winning, though not much at that point. Since Hitler and Goering thought the war would be over before they could produce a Bomb, they put their resources into other things, such as jet fighters, which paid off quite well for them, and V-1 and V-2 missiles, which didn't. ^{After 1942,} Their nuclear program was not a bomb program; it was just a research program directed mainly to the use of nuclear fission for energy. That was what their heavy water program in Norway was for. (Apparently young students know about that program because there was a recent movie about the commando raid to destroy it, which appeared on TV. What they haven't happened to have learned in school -- the movie didn't mention it -- was that the heavy water was not for bomb research or production.) They never succeeded even in getting a chain reaction in a nuclear pile, which Fermi achieved in Chicago in December, 1942. Under the bombing, their labs were too disrupted for such a major effort.

All this is fairly easy to learn (though the American public doesn't know it) from accounts of the Alsos Project,

the British and American intelligence effort on the German nuclear prospects during the war. But for a long time I didn't find the answer to a question in my mind: when did we learn that? My basic assumption was that we didn't know it until after the war in Europe was over and we had interviewed German scientists. In fact, that's not the case. British intelligence had concluded by June '44 that Germany had no Bomb program, but we didn't accept their findings at first. Our intelligence reached that conclusion, and Oppenheimer was told of it, in late '44.

He did not pass that knowledge on to more than a handful of people at the very head of the project. Most scientists were not told. Most of them believed right up to V-E Day ("Victory in Europe," for those of you too young to remember May 8, 1945) that they were racing the Germans. Many of them were struck by the fact that they didn't get a day off to celebrate the end of the war in Europe. (There was an hour off for an announcement by Oppenheimer and then he sent them back to work.) ¶ A lot of them, remember, were German and East European refugees who were focused on the Nazi threat. They thought "their" war was over at that point. They had thought of themselves as trying to beat Hitler to the bomb: to possession of it, above all, not the use of it. That seemed a strong moral justification for their effort. It still does today, given what they reasonably believed about German capabilities and the reality of the Nazi regime. ¶ But Oppenheimer himself didn't have that reason after late-1944.

Do some of you, by any chance, find that a disturbing thought? I remember very clearly that I did, very much so, when I came across it in Davis's account. It answered a question for me, but it was not an answer I was glad to learn.

I had always admired Oppenheimer for his stand opposing the hydrogen bomb. I had read the full transcript of the Oppenheimer Hearings -- when his security clearance was removed, ^{essentially} because of that opposition -- and after the Pentagon Papers trial I even identified with him a little bit. I guess I had wanted to believe that the work that made him "father of the A-bomb" had been done for a good reason. There was only one good reason: to prevent the Nazis from having a monopoly of the atomic bomb, to deter them, to keep them or anyone from ever using it. And what I had just read was that Robert Oppenheimer had known -- six months before the end of the war in Europe, nine months before his bomb was dropped on Japanese civilians -- that deterring the Germans was a non-problem. He had known from that moment on that deterring anybody from using the bomb was not what he and his colleagues were up to.

But he had been given, by the Secretary of War, another reason that seemed good enough: it was the only way to end the war promptly, to avoid an invasion. He believed it. When he was asked to advise on the merits of a harmless demonstration of the bomb versus a demonstration on people, he and his colleagues understood the aim as being "to help save American lives." They reported: "We can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use."*

*Sherwin, pp. 304-05.

"We didn't know beans about the military situation," he said later. Nor did he know, of course, of the breaking of Japanese codes and what Truman and Stimson knew of what was "likely to bring an end to the war" in terms of Japanese readiness to surrender and the imminence of Soviet entry. In being brought on board on the use of his bomb, he was being manipulated--with all his clearances--as effectively as the American people were about to be.

I wonder if it was not some sense of this--a feeling that he had been misled too easily into participating in the gravest of wrongs--that accounts for his later qualms, the "sense of sin" he reported that other physicists found easy to dismiss. After all, the use of the bomb on a city was not exactly a surprise to him, and not only because he and his colleagues found themselves advising it. Long before that, as he said later, "We always assumed that if bombs were needed they would be used."*

*Davis, p. 243

"If they were needed...." It may not have long after the war that he learned that he had trusted too quickly the judgment of those with more clearances than he had, as to what alternatives existed and how acceptable they were. "I feel we have blood on our hands," he told Truman later that year. Truman told him, "Never mind, it'll all come out in the wash."*

Davis, p. 258.

None of what is now publicly knowable about the prospects and alternatives in the summer of 1945 was available to the American people then. Nor--unlike some scientists in Chic²ão and Los Alamos, who ended up petitioning the President to forego combat use--had they spent any part of the spring reflecting, in advance, on the moral and physical dangers to humanity in the long run if America set the precedent of exploding a uranium bomb on humans. On August 6, the

hadn't yet spent a day thinking about it. They were just beginning to read about what this thing was. Before they had even two weeks to think about it, there was a different kind of news on the front pages: the war was ended. The Bomb, they read, had done this for them.

When you think about it, the Bomb came into the world under the best conceivable auspices, as far as ~~we~~ Americans were concerned. ("Best," that is, to assure that as a nation we would accept it, and cling to it, and worship it, rather than worry about it and revile it and try to abolish it. Not the best circumstances for the prospect of surviving it, in the long run.) It was the United States -- uniquely virtuous, leader of the crusade against Hitler -- that brought the Bomb into the world, developed it, and used it. Since it was us, it went without saying that the country that did all that had a right to do it. The project was begun by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It was an awesome technological achievement. (President Truman said simply, on receiving the report from Hiroshima, "This is the greatest thing in history.") It was used against the devilish and racially inferior Japanese. They had asked for it at Pearl Harbor. It was effective. It ended the war. It saved a million American lives, and even saved Japanese lives, so our President told us.

Imagine, on the contrary, if Hitler had gotten one or two bombs by April, '45, while we were the ones who had chosen against a crash bomb development. Suppose he had used them to

wipe out one or two cities, in Britain or America. It wouldn't in any way have changed Germany's prospects in the war. The Bomb would not have acquired the mystique of having ended a war with magical suddenness, compelling a tenacious enemy to surrender; it would shortly have been associated, rather, with defeat. (I'm not supposing here that Hitler had acquired 10 to 100 bombs, which would have been a different matter, though, ^{the larger number was} ~~also~~ much less likely.) But what is far more important, from its first appearance the world would have perceived the Bomb as Hitler's weapon, expressing the very essence of Nazism; a Hitlerian weapon. (which is what it is). As Howard Zinn has ³ commented, if the Bomb had been used on an Allied city, that would have been the first crime tried at Nuremberg.

Would history have been different, in the end? Would the other nations have managed to outlaw it for good, to refrain from imitating Hitler's program, ever? One can't say, ⁶ for sure; but the odds would have been a lot better than they were. At any rate, it's hard for me to believe that the Fifties would have seen this country committing itself -- as we did, under Eisenhower -- to reliance on the first-use of nuclear weapons to defend our interests and values all over the world. ^{In the actual event,} ~~Our~~ ^{supposed} alleged dependence on that commitment has been the secret strategic rationale for our leading role in the arms race ever since.

Every nuclear weapon we have bought since then, small or large, has been to bolster the credibility of such threats of

(primarily)

first us, escalation or preemption. As to our right to make threats, it has scarcely been questioned. After all (the unspoken premise goes): "If it was all right to drop the bomb on people, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, how can it be forbidden to threaten it?" (I have heard William Colby make this point publicly in defending his role as head of the Phoenix program in Vietnam, which killed twenty to forty thousand civilians: "If it was all right to use nuclear weapons...")

If it was all right And was it not? Some people at the time didn't think so, even calling it a crime; not only pacifists, but religious leaders, Catholics in particular who opposed the deliberate killing of noncombatants on Just War grounds. (The head of the Mormon Church attacked the bombing in terms as strong as any I've ever seen.) Critics as far apart politically as Hanson Baldwin, Lewis Mumford and Dwight Macdonald denounced it. In effect, they didn't accept Truman's rationale as adequate. (They didn't know then, of course, how misleading it was.) They did not consider it justified to save soldiers' lives by killing innocent civilians.

But most Americans didn't agree. After four years of being told by all authorities that it was all right to kill civilians "inadvertently" to help win the war by strategic bombing, they were ready to accept that it could be justified to kill them directly: in particular, if necessary, in order to save American lives.

Nevertheless, the American public did think, in effect, that there had to be a very good reason to justify killing

100,000 civilians at a crack. Avoiding an invasion of Japan that would cost, in Truman's large round figures, "one million" American soldiers -- if dropping the bombs was truly the only effective, acceptable way to avert it -- was such a reason, in their eyes. And that's what they were told, though it wasn't true.

Truman, Byrnes and Stimson had other reasons in mind which they thought, in all good conscience, were good enough to justify their decision. (Especially since they knew more than the public did of the body counts from our "conventional" bombing of Tokyo and Dresden five months earlier. In that light, what happened to the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was -- to quote Lieutenant Calley on My Lai -- "no big deal.") But these officials didn't choose to present their own reasoning publicly. They didn't trust most Americans to agree with them that excluding the Russians from Japanese surrender negotiations, and influencing the postwar balance of power vis-a-vis our then major wartime ally, were good enough reasons for this last-minute slaughter.

Given their (mistaken) understanding of the necessity for the bombing, the American people have had a good conscience about the action ever since. They don't feel guilty about it. But that's not quite the whole story. I've come to suspect that there has been a buried feeling at work among us, of a kind that psychologists have tended to ignore as a general category. I would call it a feeling of "potential guilt." It's a feeling, not that we have done something wrong, but

that something we did might have been wrong, very wrong, if certain facts we have been led to accept should ^{turn out} ~~happen~~ to be mistaken. The effect of this semi-conscious awareness of a "hypothetical" possibility is not quite the same as if we knew with certainty -- in our hearts, or unconsciously -- that the facts were different from what we publicly avowed or consciously believed; so that we ^{felt} ~~feel~~ ^{clearly} ~~"really"~~ guilty of a crime. (That would correspond to the well-analyzed phenomenon of repressed or unacknowledged guilt.) Rather, the effect is ^{an} intense lack of interest in reexamination; a strong resistance to finding out whether or not the true facts might be different from what we've been led to believe. (A similar effect could follow from a sense of "potential error.") It leads to what I've called anti-learning mechanisms, a "*need not to know.*"*

I notice that effect in Americans' attitudes toward the history of the original use of nuclear weapons, the only use so far that directly killed people. A generation of scholarship establishing that the original justification we were given for that act was almost wholly invalid has not entered American consciousness in the slightest. Hardly anyone is aware of it. And anyone who does draw pointed conclusions

* A late bulletin from the New York Times, April 19, 1984: "It is striking, Lebanese say, how thoroughly the American presence here has been erased just seven weeks after the last marine in the multinational force left Beirut and how quickly the United States seems to have forgotten about its Lebanese adventure ... In the rush to forget about Lebanon, American officials say, no one in Washington seems keen to study the many lessons that could be gleaned from the United States involvement here. There will be no Lebanese Pentagon Papers, they say."

from all the evidence that is now available raises a storm of counter-argument and denunciation and reassertion of the traditional "brief" that I find noteworthy. (The man who first brought the bad news, Gar Alperowitz in Atomic Diplomacy, has been attacked ever since in scholarly writings and his major findings dismissed -- even after they have been thoroughly confirmed by others -- such as Sherwin and even ^FFeis -- in a way that his minor inaccuracies do not begin to explain.) The American people are very reluctant to hear -- and few members of the academic and media establishment are willing to say -- that what Harry Truman and Stimson told us about the reasons for destroying two cities full of people may have been incomplete, misleading, wrong. I find that reassuring. It says to me that people are capable of recognizing the action as a very great error, a wrong, even a crime, if they learn that the official justification does not hold up.

Some evidence for that is the (relatively) frequent questioning and even denunciation of the bombing in Nagasaki. The point is that the official rationale for bombing Hiroshima -- which isn't questioned -- simply does not serve very well to rationalize the second bomb, especially for dropping it just three days after the first. The explanation is usually laid to thoughtlessness or inertia (which I think is wrong), but the very discussion shows a healthy concern.

Americans, like other people, do not want to be accessories to a major crime, or to reproducing one. My hope and belief is that if they came to see our past and projected

nuclear actions in that light -- which would follow for many of them if the facts could be gotten through to them -- many will act determinedly to prevent its being done again.

Q: But if exposing hidden facts or history are likely, mainly, to pr

note a sense of guilt ... is that really helpful? Is that

ffective motivation? The same question applies to

nuclear actions in that light -- which would follow for many of them if the facts could be gotten through to them -- many will act determinedly to prevent its being done again.

Q: But if exposing hidden facts or history are likely, mainly, to promote a sense of guilt ... is that really helpful? Is that really an effective motivation? The same question applies to indicting people.

DE: What we want is change -- not paralyzing guilt, or punishment or revenge. You're right that guilt isn't a reliable motivation -- to say the least -- for the kind of change we want. ^{yet} ~~But~~ one way of describing the change we're talking about here is that we want our country, and other countries, to stop committing certain massive crimes, and to stop planning and preparing to commit them. And to stop pretending that these intentions and preparations aren't evil, stop legitimating them.

I think the notion of crime, of evil or wrong, is useful
(Perhaps I differ from Ram Dass on this point).
as a motivation, maybe even essential. ^ These notions can be

56 — 60

(56-59 omitted)

~~admit that it's hard and calls for special awareness~~
separated -- though ~~we don't often do it~~ -- from the notions of guilt, blame, indictment, accusation, punishment, which are much less helpful psychologically and politically and which arouse harmful counteractions and defenses.

People want to avoid participating in evil crimes -- like planning or committing massacre -- not only because they want to avoid punishment and feeling guilty, ^{or going on record} Humans want to do what is right, to be good. They are, certainly, very open to manipulation by authorities and to self-deception on this score. But in this country above all, they can also get information against the will of authorities that can change their minds.

The point of revealing history that has been guiltily kept secret, in my mind, is not to punish criminals or past crimes. It is not to hold war crimes trials, even quasi ones. The point is to help us stop crimes that are going on right now, with our ignorant participation, and to prevent others that are being planned and prepared. To do that it is important to recognize them as crimes, and for that a background of history can be indispensable. Granted, either buried guilt or what I have called a sense of potential guilt throws up resistances to seeking the understanding we need for change. There may be ways to surmount that, to the extent that it rests on fear, fear of reprisal or punishment.

In Santa Rita jail after our last blockade at Livermore Laboratory, some of the twelve ministers who were arrested with us asked me to join one of their discussions. In the

course of it one of them commented that neither we as a nation nor any of our leaders had ever asked the Japanese people to forgive us for what we had done to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Maybe this would be a good thing for ministers to promote, I pointed out that most Americans didn't feel

to be forgiven.

feel

course of it one of them commented that neither we as a nation nor any of our leaders had ever asked the Japanese people to forgive us for what we had done to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Maybe this would be a good thing for ministers to promote. I pointed out that most Americans didn't feel there was anything to be forgiven, given their understanding of the motives and circumstances of the bombing. To be sure, their understanding is mistaken, and a first step would be to find a way to change that.

I didn't spell out why this was important, but I'll say it now. Nearly all Americans accept an account of Hiroshima that gravely misleads them on the important question: What does it take to get an American President to drop a nuclear weapon on people? In the case of the one President who did do that, most Americans infer that to get him to blot out the lives of 300,000 people with two nuclear weapons required -- in the minds of his top military and civilian advisors and his own mind -- the otherwise-inevitable prospect of an indefinite continuation of the war against Japan, and an invasion that would cost a million U.S. lives. Such circumstances seem quite unlikely to recur.

But those were not, in fact, the circumstances that led to the death of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The fallacy is comforting, but it is also dangerous. It doesn't prepare Americans to imagine -- it makes it easy to conceal from them -- that every one of the Presidents they have elected since Truman has threatened or engaged secretly in serious discus-

sion and preparations for possible imminent U.S. first-use of nuclear weapons. And every case involved circumstances much less desperate, and much more likely to recur in the future, than those Americans wrongly suppose confronted Harry Truman in July and August 1945. So the public sense of risk and urgency is less than realistic.

Yet this is one of several important issues in which it is hard to mount investigations or begin a process of public education, because of widespread opposition to "recrimination," finger-pointing, conflicts over punishment. Far from being willing to admit guilt or even recognize crime, we are not even ready, as a nation, to perceive the possibility that what was done could reasonably be challenged that way. Semi-consciously, I suspect, we know that if it was wrong at all, it was very, very wrong. As a result we are going along ignorantly with preparations to do it again.

Maybe, I suggested to the ministers, what was needed was for Americans, ^{as individuals, and each other} to forgive ourselves for what we might have done or left undone in the nuclear era. We need to forgive ourselves as citizens, as tax-payers, as parents, as humans; and as employees of the Pentagon, the White House, the nuclear laboratories but not at all in order to forget and to put what has been done under the rug. ^{Rather, precisely in order to remember, at least, to seek understand} ~~Rather~~, perhaps we should ^{and change.} simply ^{refer} ~~issue~~ each other amnesty, ^{issue} ~~recommend~~ a blanket pardon -- the kind that Presidents get -- for whatever wrong we may have done, so far. ^{Assure each other in advance that there will be} ~~no trials, no prison, no punishment of individuals.~~ ^{STET} ~~so that we may dare together for the first time to~~ ^{or even audacious condemnation} ~~STET~~

~~No question of trials, no prison, no punishment or even ^{audacious} punishment~~
~~condemnation of individuals~~

look into the question of our use of the Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and in "atomic diplomacy" since then. Self-forgiveness might free us to look clearly, at last, at what we ^{and let} have done, so that we can learn from it. It might permit us, with less fear, to discover wrong, even evil where it has been done by us, so that we can begin to learn how to stop doing it.

Q: The same is true about our actions in Vietnam and elsewhere.

DE: Yes.

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In the present situation the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal is a grave danger to us -- and to themselves, and to the rest of the world. As is our own. Whatever danger Soviet weapons were in 1960, they are a much larger danger now, just as ours now pose a larger danger to ourselves and everyone.*
^{But}
~~And~~ as most people outside governments can perceive, the interaction of U.S. and Soviet nuclear programs and plans is by far the most dangerous threat to each of us -- and to human survival -- dwarfing any unilateral challenges that either one poses to the interests of the other.

But that interaction has gone through two rather sharply different phases in the post-war period. It's important for the public to learn this, because the shift -- in the direction of increasing danger -- was influenced greatly by U.S. policies. Those policies continue, to increasingly dangerous effect. And they have relied greatly, I would say, on public ignorance of the realities both of Soviet programs and posture and of the U.S.' policies.

The common perception of the Soviets being locked with us for 38 years in a race for nuclear superiority is a myth -- just as the belief in a "race" with Germany to get the Bomb was mistaken after 1942. A two-way "race" didn't really start in a serious way until the mid-sixties, almost twenty years

* Each nation could now cause hemispheric, possibly global, "nuclear winter" with a small fraction of its own weapons. According to Carl Sagan, the U.S. stockpile attained that capability in about 1953, the Soviet Union in 1970, or with less assurance by 1964.

into the nuclear era. That second phase began essentially when Khrushchev was replaced by Brezhnev (or just before).

From the time of Hiroshima, the Russians did try to reproduce any technical achievement of ours as quickly as they could, which in most cases involved a rather standard lag of about three to five years. (Although the Soviets are often presented as having had the H-bomb sooner, in fact they got it well after the U.S. did.)* The one case where they were ahead of us, actually, was in the testing of large intercontinental ballistic missiles, which they started about a year before we were able to. But we still installed operational ICBMs before they did, as well as deploying a lot more of them. So at almost every step we have been ahead of them.

But that, too, is misleading as a picture of the nuclear arms competition in the first phase, from 1945 to 1963. Once having matched our technical achievements in tests, they did not then proceed to produce a large number of weapons, with the exception of medium and intermediate range missiles aimed at Europe. They began producing these in large numbers from the late '50s on. But until about 1964, they produced very few bombers, ICBMs, and sub-launched missiles.

Thus, in the early years of the nuclear era, the U.S. was really the only party "racing," except in a technical sense. They were far behind us in available forces and capabilities, and they weren't trying to match us. Because of Khrushchev's

*See Herbert York, The Advisors: Oppenheimer, Teller and the Superbomb, (University of California, San Diego) pp. 10, 89-93.

choice not even to seek parity, or anything approaching it, we were the only country in the world who had the ability to disarm the opponent, or even to think of disarming the opponent. Only the United States could have struck the opponent without incurring massive retaliation. And to put it the other way around, only the U.S. could assure an attacker of devastating retaliation as a basis for deterring an attack on itself.

That's totally against the public's impression, of course. We kept hearing about the Soviets being on the verge of superiority to us -- in the mid-'50s, the bomber gap that they were supposed to have, and later the missile gap in the late '50s. Americans were always being told that we were just behind. Thus, we have grown up with this picture that we have barely beaten them out each time. That's never been true. Up through the Khrushchev era, it had no relation to reality at all, even in terms of what the Soviets were attempting.

As a result, by 1961 we had fifteen bombers and twenty nuclear warheads on missiles within range of the Soviet Union for every Soviet bomber and missile that could reach the U.S. Khrushchev had strong reason to back down in confrontations, as he did not only in "our" sphere in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 but on the border of the Communist sphere in the Taiwan Straits in 1958 (the Quemoy crisis) and within the Soviet bloc itself in the Berlin crisis in 1961. And that reason was not just the balance, or imbalance, of nuclear stockpiles. What mattered above all was the use, in threats, that the U.S. made of its weapons and its superiority in

strategic delivery capability (which amounted to near-monopoly -- a condition that can never be regained, or approximated, by either side).

Pic of DE & Audience

DE: How many people remember the Berlin Crisis in July of 1961? Who recalls Kennedy urging all of us to buy fallout shelters before the end of the year in case of a thermonuclear war?

A good number. [Pointing] You weren't very old then.

Q: Eleven.

DE: What do you remember of that?

Q: Just that we were all going to go up in smoke.

DE: How did that come through to you? Do you remember?

Q: Fear.

DE: No, I mean how did you learn about it? From your parents?

Q: Probably from television.

DE: Who else remembers anything?

Q: In grammar school I remember bomb practice and running out in the hallway and taking our little uniform jackets off and putting them over our heads.

DE: You ^{covered your heads.} ~~took your jackets off.~~

pic of DE reaction pic

(laughter) Well, why not? Try anything. What do you remember?

Q: I was visiting a cousin who worked for HEW, and she showed me a paper she brought home from work listing who was considered "expendable," in case we all couldn't get into shelters.

DE: And where did you fit?

Q: In the women over childbearing age category. I was expendable. Also, all children who couldn't take care of themselves were expendable. When it came to males who could bear arms, however, they jumped to 60 years old, the age of the generals. They were not deemed expendable.

DE: You would show this paper at the door of the shelter and say, "Now, I'm asking for sanctuary"? Many people do remember the controversy associated with the shelters, which was the

only time I recall that thermonuclear war evoked a major ethical row among churchmen, until this last year or two. The issue was whether it was Christian to arm yourself with a machine gun to keep out your neighbors who had not provided themselves with a shelter. How many remember? You remember how that came out? I think it was generally concluded that it was within the "just war" doctrine to defend one's family if the improvident neighbor had not built a fallout shelter, or it leaked, or they ran out of reading material. You were within your rights to repel them.

How many people here who remember the Berlin Crisis had it clearly in mind that President Kennedy was talking about a thermonuclear exchange that would not be started by the Soviet Union?

One person. You understood that? How did you have that insight?

Q: A military man told me.

DE: That's interesting. But, you see, it follows from what I've just been saying. We had 3,000 bombers and over 200 missiles in range of Russia at that time.

What the Soviets had in range of the U.S. in 1961 was 194 intercontinental bombers and exactly four ICBMs. So Kennedy was not really worried that the Soviets would start a nuclear war, with their four ICBMs.

Yet the rest of you -- like most Americans -- didn't know

that. The nuclear war that you were led to worry about, a Soviet-initiated escalation or surprise attack, was a mirage. The nuclear operations that might really have occurred if the Soviets had destroyed or captured our ground probes to Berlin and threatened our reinforcements -- the nuclear war that threatened both the Soviets and Americans at home, that called for U.S. fallout shelters -- would have been begun by the U.S.

We would not have been starting the war, as we saw it. Rather we would have been responding to the Soviet efforts to prevent us from moving forcefully on the ground into Berlin. We would have been escalating a non-nuclear conflict, first by using tactical nuclear weapons, and then, if the Soviets didn't back down, with our strategic weapons against Russia.

Berlin was, in effect, an island in East Germany. And there were seven Soviet divisions in the vicinity of Berlin, 20 or so within East Germany, plus East German divisions. There was no way that we could outnumber them on the ground, any more than we could match or outnumber them in Iran. This has nothing to do with the overall balance or the fact that they have a draft. It has to do with the area in which conflict might occur, that area being next to Russian territory or surrounded by Soviet troops.

To protect our interests in Berlin we invoked the threat of initiating nuclear war. That's what we were threatening. Kennedy threatened this and the Soviets were meant to hear it, although the American people were not. That's why you haven't been told to this day what the actual overall military balance

was; it remains top secret.

If you look in most history books right now you'll read that "there wasn't any missile gap." They tell you the Soviets had "about 50" missiles -- not 1,000, as the Strategic Air Command had claimed, not 120-160 as CIA had estimated that spring, but 50.

But that figure is inflated by an "order of magnitude," a factor of ten. They didn't really have 50 intercontinental missiles; they had 4. There was a missile gap, after all: enormously in our favor. (Ten to one in ICBMs; fifty to one in ballistic warheads in range of each other, including intermediate-range and sub-launched missiles).


Fifty Soviet ICBMs would have meant two for almost every major SAC base in this country, a significant number. Four ICBMs was no missiles, essentially. (Their four above-ground, non-alert, liquid-fueled SS-6s, on a single pad at Plesetsk, could easily have been destroyed by a single U.S. plane with non-nuclear weapons.)

That is the reality that has never been declassified. It was soon to change.

A generation later, we're still faced off with the Soviets in Berlin. We're still persuaded that we have "vital interests" in numerous other places, some of them, like Iran, on the border of the Soviet Union. Particularly in those latter places where the Soviets inevitably have a non-nuclear advantage, we're still relying on first-use nuclear threats to protect our interests. But the chances that the Soviet

leaders will back down in a confrontation are significantly lower than before, and the consequences if they don't, a good deal worse. Because the Soviets don't have just four measly missiles any more. Twenty years ago, Phase Two of the nuclear era ensued.

In good part precisely because of the backdowns he was forced to make, Khrushchev was fired. Brezhnev came in, with the support of the military; he promised them they would never again have to back down by reason of nuclear inferiority. He would spend whatever it took to reach and maintain equality with us. He did that; and his successors seem absolutely determined to keep doing it. That means that when we deploy new capabilities, you should bet that the Soviets will develop and (unlike Khrushchev) deploy comparable capabilities as soon as they can -- whether or not that seems to be in their long-term interests. ¶ In effect, the replacement of Khrushchev and the subsequent Soviet build-up ever since 1964 was the price of our successes in nuclear crises in Quemoy and Berlin and Cuba, along with our reluctance to negotiate a comprehensive test ban that would have halted our own build-up as well as preventing theirs. The price was high.



Q: Might not the Soviet buildup to parity have had one good effect: that the U.S. would no longer be tempted to make first-use threats?

DE: Soviet parity should have had that effect. But it didn't. By 1964, even the most committed advocate of deterrence-by-first-use-threats should have concluded that that game was over forever, that the risks had become intolerable. But twenty years have gone by, and the game still hasn't ended. U.S. Presidents have continued to make threats against allies of the Soviet Union or the Soviets themselves in the very same circumstances as before. And these circumstances are likely to keep on arising, under our present policies and perceptions of our rights and "vital interests." The risks have, as you suggest, become much larger than before, and they've been growing sharply in the last few years. But apparently they are still tolerable, in the eyes of our last five Presidents.

In 1968, when U.S. Marines were surrounded at Khe Sanh in South Vietnam, active consideration was given at the White House to the possible need to defend them with tactical nuclear weapons. General Westmoreland warned they might be necessary if an attack came in bad flying weather (he still thinks they should have been used, to "send a signal"). A flurry of "leaks" effectively got the message to our Vietnamese opponents, who chose not to attack. No change there, despite parity, from every other case in the Cold War era in

which U.S. or allied troops were surrounded and in danger of being overwhelmed: Berlin 1948; Korea 1950; Indochina 1954 (the French rejected our offer of nuclear weapons to defend Dienbienphu); Quemoy 1958; Berlin 1961.

When Nixon inherited a costly stalemate in Vietnam in 1969 -- as Eisenhower had in Korea in 1953 -- he decided to break through it the same way his former boss did. He made secret threats of massive escalation, including the possible use of nuclear weapons. (He knew more about Eisenhower's secret ultimatum than the rest of us, having been Vice President at the time.) His only concession to the new situation of parity was to have his emissary, Henry Kissinger, express the threat in terms of "possible" rather than certain use of nuclear weapons. But the nuclear targets were picked, and detailed planning folders were delivered to the White House.3

In 1973, Brezhnev proposed a joint U.S./Soviet peace-keeping force to enforce the ceasefire in the Mideast war. He warned that he was preparing to put Soviet troops into Egypt unilaterally for that purpose if the U.S. would not join him. U.S. strategic nuclear forces worldwide were put on the highest level of alert since the Cuban Missile Crisis, to signal White House determination to oppose a Soviet "peacekeeping" presence in the Mideast with U.S. combat forces willing to go to nuclear war if necessary. (The major objective of this nuclear threat was to exclude the Soviet Union from a legitimate military presence in the region and from participation in regional peace negotiations. It is interesting to note the

parallel to the actual motives of Truman and Byrnes in the very first "use" of nuclear weapons.) The U.S. was warning that the undesired Soviet actions, which the U.S. wished to deter, would lead to direct U.S./Soviet combat involvement; this would in turn have a high probability of escalating to nuclear war.

The Carter Doctrine in 1980 amounted to precisely the same sort of nuclear threat for the Middle East as a whole, focused on the area adjacent to the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. White House backgrounders took pains to make it clear that what was being threatened was a confrontation with U.S. forces that would escalate to nuclear warfare by U.S. initiative if the Soviets did not back off. As Secretary of Defense Harold Brown put it in his last interview in office, what would keep the Russians out of northern Iran was "the risk of World War III."

President Reagan used almost the same words the next month, his first in office. What was needed, he told interviewers, was a U.S. ground presence in the Middle East not large enough to stop the Soviet Union -- "We know we couldn't do that" -- but large enough to assure them a "confrontation that could become World War III." World War III launched, with nuclear weapons, by whom? Not by the Soviets. According to Pentagon studies under Carter, they would outnumber our expeditionary force by twenty to one, not because they have a bigger army or a draft, but because Iran is on their border. We could no more match Soviet non-nuclear strength in the

northern Middle East than the Soviets could block us from the oil or gas of Mexico or Canada with conventional forces.

To protect U.S. control of the distribution of the oil of the Persian Gulf, Carter and Reagan have relied on the same strategy in the '80s that Eisenhower and Kennedy used to protect the U.S. position in Berlin a generation earlier. The same threat: to burn and freeze the Northern Hemisphere, if the Soviets didn't back down from a use of conventional force. For the same reason: a perception of "vital U.S. interest" in a region that happens to be on the Soviet border or surrounded by Soviet divisions. All that has changed is the strategic balance, and with it the assurance that the Soviets will back down in a future confrontation.

Over two decades Brezhnev invested over a trillion dollars on nuclear and other hardware to match the U.S. and reverse that assurance. He convinced me that the risks of trying to back the Soviets down with nuclear threats are higher than they were in 1962. I may be easy to convince; but I doubt that Carter would really disagree that the risks had risen, let alone Reagan. (After all, Reagan actually says the Soviets are "superior," which is ignorant or crazy, if he isn't kidding.) How can it be ^{our presidents} ~~that they~~ are still committing us to such risks? That becomes less unimaginable when we consider the risks that Presidents were already accepting for us in the era before parity.

In 1962, President Kennedy privately estimated the odds on nuclear war in the Cuban Missile Crisis between one in

three and even. That shocked me when I heard it just after the crisis ended. I had been working day and night in the Pentagon for a week on strategies to make the Russians back down. I had put the risks much lower than that. I knew what the nuclear balance was. So I wasn't too worried, actually. Everybody outside Washington was, but I figured they didn't know how much the balance was tipped in our favor. Sleeping in the Pentagon a few hours a night, I slept well. I didn't know any better.

It seemed to me that the Russians had to back down. I was 31 years old; unlike Kennedy, I had never yet been in a war. A few years later, when I got an intense education in wartime confusion, military momentum, and reckless fear of retreat, I realized that Kennedy's estimate had not been exaggerated after all.

But even in 1962, when I heard that judgment by Kennedy -- and that of Paul Nitze, my boss, whose estimate was even higher -- I was stunned. What shocked me was not the estimate but the apparent recklessness. I could hardly imagine that the President had been choosing to do what we were doing -- preparing a strike on the Russian missiles in Cuba and the invasion of Cuba -- when he believed the risks of general war were that high.

We were not planning to use nuclear weapons first in Cuba (although Kennedy did promise a "full retaliatory strike against the Soviet Union" if a single missile was launched from Cuba -- e.g., by Castro -- in the heat of our attack). We have no

more need to rely on first-use threats in the Caribbean, where our conventional superiority is vast, than the Soviets would in Turkey or Berlin. That's true today. The link to general war from a conflict in Cuba -- then or now -- would be a Soviet choice to expand or transfer the conflict to an area where they had a conventional superiority. (Secretary Weinberger calls this tactic "horizontal escalation." He plans to use it.) ^{2 19-2} They could ^{have} match_A our blockade of Cuba with a blockade of Berlin. They could respond to attacks on their intermediate-range missiles in Cuba by attacking our intermediate-range missiles then based in Turkey. Either of those would have put the prestige and cohesion of NATO in question, invoking our full treaty commitment to NATO. In those days our plans and preparations for conflict in either place involved early initiation of nuclear warfare, unless the Soviets retreated almost at once. ^R Kennedy's estimate of the odds on general war reflected his guess that they might try one or both of those responses. I spent Saturday afternoon, the climax of the crisis, helping define "alternative options" for our response to their hitting the IRBMs in Turkey. Our attack on their IRBMs in Cuba, which might have triggered their retaliation, was then scheduled for Monday. At that moment, Robert Kennedy was at the Soviet Embassy, delivering a 48-hour ultimatum to Ambassador Dobrynin.

As Kennedy perceived, there would have been a certain logic in Russian retaliation against our IRBMs in Turkey. Turkey borders the Soviet Union. Kennedy was demanding that

the Soviets remove a "threat" they were in process of installing "90 miles from our shores" which happened to be identical to the threat we had installed a few years earlier adjacent to their territory. The issue was whether the Soviets had a right to do on our borders what we were doing on their borders. (The real issue, of course, was whether they had the power to do it, not the right.) ^{we say '75, in context,} We said, "No, we can do it but you can't. That's the difference between us." And in 1962, Russia had to acknowledge that it was the difference between us. Then they set out, through their arms buildup of the '60s and '70s, to eliminate that difference.

Meanwhile, in 1962, Kennedy was virtually certain that if he had to carry out his ultimatum and invade Cuba, the Soviets would blockade Berlin. That would have meant a replay of the Berlin crisis of 1961. Kennedy had not been at all certain that Khrushchev would back down that time, either. It was a gamble. Even though it was a gamble the U.S. was likely to win, the odds on nuclear war were not one in a million. They looked much higher, closer to the one in three that Kennedy estimated the next year.

Robert McNamara has recently indicated that he was privately determined never to initiate nuclear war under any circumstances, and that he believed President Kennedy shared this determination. Yet the odds were significantly high for nuclear war in both these crises even ^{assuming} ~~if it were~~ true that both men -- before the initial combat clashes -- shared this resolve to avoid it. (Kennedy's estimate in 1962, reported by

his closest associate Theodore Sorensen, indicates that he understood this.) Unless Kennedy had been willing to back down, in a Berlin challenge without even initiating conventional probes on the ground -- and no one has suggested that he was -- events would have been likely to override any prior, personal reservations against carrying out his clear public commitments to first-use when necessary, commitments embodied in NATO and U.S. planning and preparations. In fact, once combat forces were joined in Central Europe, events could quickly have moved entirely beyond his control.

In both years, Kennedy's actions implied acceptance of these risks. And the stakes were vast. Even though the Soviets had only four operational ICBMs in the first year and ten in ^{October 1962} ~~the second~~ (with 60-70 under construction), they had about 600 SS-4 and SS-5 intermediate-range missiles with one-megaton warheads. Even striking first, we could not have counted on preventing Europe's annihilation by ~~getting~~ ^{destroying} nearly all of those before they were launched.

A nuclear conflict over Berlin -- perhaps arising in a conflict involving Cuba -- would probably have resulted in the deaths of most Europeans, East and West. [And though Kennedy did not know it, no Soviet ICBMs at all were needed to include the U.S., as well, in the general holocaust. Given the scale and nature of U.S. general war plans at the time, U.S. citizens would have been almost totally exterminated by the "nuclear winter" brought about by the explosion of U.S. warheads on the Soviet bloc, if Khrushchev had failed to back down and Kennedy

had carried out his threats.]

Even though the risks that threats will fail and lead to nuclear war are significantly higher now in the era of parity, they were high enough twenty years ago -- given the stakes -- to make the difference seem marginal. If John F. Kennedy felt compelled to take the gambles he did -- and Eisenhower before him, especially in the Quemoy Crisis of 1958 -- we need not be astounded to find current leaders betting the world, for interests that seem "vital" only by the standards of a pre-thermonuclear era.

Q: If we made it clear that we were not ready to initiate nuclear war under any circumstances, then the Soviets could say they'll just take over Europe like they did Poland, and that they are willing to use nuclear weapons. So if you're not ready to do the same, I guess the game is theirs.

DE: That's like saying that there would be no way to defend Western Europe from Russia if nuclear weapons had never been invented. And that's really not true.

Q: We could use conventional warfare. But what if they were willing to use their nuclear weapons?

DE: I'm assuming the U.S. would maintain a capability to retaliate to Soviet first-use, either tactical or strategic. The Soviets would be taking on themselves the same risks we

would be in starting it. Either side that initiates nuclear war is taking on itself enormous suicidal risks.

Q: But they'd be taking on significantly less risk if we were on record as saying we would not use ours first.

DE: Strictly speaking, the Soviets are on the record now as saying they will not initiate nuclear war. How much does that weaken them by saying that?

Q: I don't think it weakens them; I don't think it really limits their options.

DE: Why would it weaken us if we said the same?

Q: It wouldn't. But partly, the thing is that they and we don't do what we say we will or won't do a lot of times.

DE: It's true that just saying it doesn't change the situation very much. But once having said it, each can be challenged to implement that policy, by removing from Europe all weapons that are only suited for first-use, because they are vulnerable to nuclear attack. That would mean removing every land-based nuclear weapon in Europe, East and West (including tactical weapons in the western Soviet Union.) That would be an impressive change. NATO could meanwhile be preparing to defend itself without relying on nuclear first-use. It has

more than enough resources to draw on, far more than the Warsaw Pact.

We are told by our government that NATO neither has non-nuclear capability to defend itself nor could feasibly have it. The truth is that the NATO bloc has a much larger GNP, more advanced technology, and larger population than the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. If you take Western Europe alone, its population is larger than that of Russia. The draft-age male pool has always been larger, and -- here is a little surprise, just a simple figure on the record: Since the mid-1950s, NATO has usually had more men under arms than Russia and the Warsaw Pact nations. It fluctuates a bit year by year, and for the last couple of years Russia and the Warsaw Pact have had somewhat more, maybe a hundred or two hundred thousand men more than NATO. But most years NATO has had more men under arms.

To defend without nuclear weapons, NATO should be better deployed, better integrated, have larger stocks and faster mobilization, tank obstacles, and so forth; the necessary improvements should cost less than Reagan is calling for with a nuclear strategy. (And keep in mind that NATO can't "defend itself" at all by using nuclear weapons in combat.) The Soviets have some advantages. They have an ability to mobilize people somewhat faster than we do. They have many more tanks; we have many more anti-tank weapons, and we could have a lot more than we do. If you look at underlying strength, the two sides are very evenly balanced on non-nuclear capabil-

ity. NATO already has an enormous non-nuclear capability. It's not at all true that NATO has relied mainly on nuclear weapons because it is necessarily deficient in non-nuclear ~~forces. capability.~~

Q: So you are saying that both sides are potentially pretty well matched both in conventional forces and in nuclear weapons.

DE: Yes, that's right.

Q: But the atmosphere seems to be such that -- take the way the Soviets went into Poland. You don't think that justifies warfare, what they did to Poland?

DE: I don't think it's something that we can remedy by warfare without blowing the world up.

Q: So then isn't that a clear message to the Russians that we don't think it's worth going to war for West Germany, for example? Doesn't that undercut deterrence?

DE: No. Here is the difference. They've been sitting with troops in Poland and East Germany for over 30 years now; that's been part of their empire, their sphere of influence. If we went into Poland, we would initiate World War III; that would be true even if no-first-use were observed by both sides, or if nuclear weapons had never existed. It's equally

clear that if they went into West Germany (or Saudi Arabia, even though we don't have troops there now) they would have World War III on their hands; and that sure knowledge is a strong deterrent. Nuclear weapons aren't critical to that in either case; ^{a major US/Soviet war} ~~World War III~~, fought with conventional weapons is a very adequate deterrent.

Russian policy shows a very consistent determination not to give up something that they are holding or that they control; they clearly will not submit to that. But they haven't shown that they are willing to take major risks or even minor risks to acquire additional territory. What they are defending now is exactly where their armies sat in May 1945, with the exception of Afghanistan, which is on their border.

Thirty years later, as Poland reveals, their degree of dominance in the countries of Eastern Europe has no legitimacy in any real sense. It is just as imperial as our chosen regime of generals and terrorists in El Salvador, or other underdeveloped countries where we have that kind of control. After Lenin, Marxists came to a definition of imperialism that identified it with capitalism. The truth is that empire as a reality and a concept existed long before capitalism and, it turns out, exists after capitalism. Getting rid of capitalism does not get rid of domination or hierarchy or exploitation, including domination and exploitation of other countries by stronger "socialist" powers.

Profit in a technical sense doesn't have to be a motive for such domination. There's a variety of motives: ^(for both superpowers) the

exploitation of natural resources, favorable terms of trade, cheap labor, strategic locations, prestige, ^{and perhaps above all,} ~~or just~~ maintaining a domestic status quo in the homeland. Undoubtedly the Russians believe that if they lost their grip on East Europe and allowed it to evolve in new ways, those same new ways would have a tendency to penetrate into Russia, destabilizing the rule of the Party and the status of managers and the military. So they are protecting a particular power structure. Russia itself was typically thought of as an empire before 1917, as a collection of peoples with considerable centripetal forces. That is still true.

Most experts on the Middle East don't think that the Soviets have any active plans for moving militarily or for establishing strong controls over countries in the Middle East. The Soviets know all too well the danger that would be involved. They believe that our government would fight to the death to protect U.S. oil interests there. They are right. That's a reality which they quite clearly perceive. They are not likely to challenge us there.

On the other hand, I am not impressed by the argument that simply because they are socialist and because they have a great deal of oil of their own, the Russians would have no desire whatever to have the kind of control over that oil that we have. The fact is we don't use most of the oil ourselves; we sell it, to Europe and Japan. And the Russians need foreign exchange; the Russians could sell it as well as our corporations. We also establish political influence with it. The Russians

would not reject that political influence if they had the chance to have it. The issue is whether they would fight us to acquire those benefits. Almost certainly they would not, even if the war could be guaranteed to remain non-nuclear.

So it is a question of great powers playing what is to some extent a game of imperial competition, within certain limits and rules.

In the 19th century the competition in Afghanistan between Britain and Russia was called the Great Game. But for some time now, Afghanistan has been regarded as being within the Russian sphere of influence, just as Central America has been considered part of our sphere of influence. The Russians will take no risks to defend anyone in Central America or the Caribbean (with the possible exception of Cuba). But when a rebellion broke out next-door in Afghanistan against a pro-Soviet regime, they sent in troops.

We're seeing comparable rebellions in Central America, and we're intervening and preparing to send in troops. It is very similar behavior. This doesn't mean we are about ready to invade Poland, and they know that. And they're not about to invade West Germany or the Middle East, for the same reason. Neither side is about to relinquish influence over "its" prized sphere, and neither is willing to risk World War III by threatening the other's sphere.

Each side describes the other as expansionist and aggressive. What is the reality? A sphere of influence is traditionally defined as an area where a great power acts as if it has

a right and a need to intervene with armed force if there is a rebellion, if someone tries to change the government or its policies against the great power's perceived interest. When you look at the Soviet sphere and the U.S. or Western sphere, you find that neither side has pushed into the other nation's sphere very much at all in ^{NEARLY 40} 30 years. They have mounted violent operations only against rebellions in their own sphere, or what they regarded as their own sphere. That's quite contrary to the mythology, to the image of the Cold War, in which each side portrays itself as endlessly fending off the other's lust to commit territorial "aggression" at the first opportunity.

Each side claims and even believes that rebellions in its own sphere are aided by the other superpower. There is some truth to this. But each side enormously exaggerates the degree and the critical role of that interference. They do that in order to justify their own repressive operation. They also tend to deceive themselves about the popularity and the competence of their own rule and their local puppets. They can't believe that the "locals" could be giving them so much trouble on their own; they must be getting crucial advice, management, and arms from outside agitators, and ultimately from a suitably respectable adversary, preferably a superpower. The imperial power finds it almost impossible to take the force of local nationalism seriously.

Is the West without influence in Poland? No. No doubt, the CIA, Polish-Americans, the Pope and various others have funneled money to Solidarity. But to regard Solidarity -- as

the Russians depict it -- as a CIA plot against them, that's crazy. It is an enormous Polish movement. Neither the CIA nor the KGB have the ability to whistle up such a vast, dedicated, well-organized campaign. Yet the Russians and the Polish Party use the excuse that Solidarity is a CIA plot to justify their repressive measures against it. The same is true for resistance movements in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan. In every one of those cases there was some degree of Western influence; but to see it as pivotal (as Russian leaders may even believe) is surely wrong.

The Brezhnev Doctrine, which came up in regard to Czechoslovakia in 1968, was designed to prevent any Eastern "socialist" nation from leaving the Soviet-dominated sphere. Of course, the way Brezhnev explained it was that Czechoslovakia was being subverted by the West. It is the right and the obligation of the "Socialist Bloc" to protect "socialism" in Czechoslovakia, by invading it. That was also the claim made regarding Hungary, Afghanistan, and likewise Solidarity in Poland. In every case the Soviets said, "Our real opponent is the CIA, it's the U.S. -- not the local people -- and to prevent these foreign machinations we must protect those good communists who are on our side in those countries. That justifies our troops going in." The Cold War has helped Soviet leaders to present these operations favorably to their own citizens, who don't want to think of themselves as dominating those countries; they prefer to hear that their army is "protecting" them.

In the same fashion, the U.S. has acted decisively to defend Lebanon, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Taiwan/ Quemoy, and El Salvador from "Russian intervention and control."

It is now lending its good offices to this end in

Nicaragua, ^{conducting an open "covert" war against its government.} In place of preserving "socialism" we say "freedom

and democracy," ^{(or more cautiously - in El Salvador - we are protecting} In most cases, these terms are twisted euphe-

misms for regimes of corrupt torturers -- regimes that are ferociously unfree and anti-democratic, but are subservient, "pro-American" and roughly capitalist.

The alleged "Russian threat" to Guatemala in 1954 was essentially imaginary. Likewise to Chile in 1970-73, to the Dominican Republic in 1965, to Lebanon in 1958 or Iran 1953. Russian threats to the "independence and self-determination" of these targets of U.S. intervention were, in each case, as illusory as the threats posed to our "retaliatory" nuclear forces by the bomber gap, the missile gap, and the recent "window of vulnerability."

I was employed in the Pentagon when Lyndon Johnson pointed to the threat of communist takeover in the Dominican Republic in explaining why we were compelled to land 20,000 Marines there. Now, you might well have thought communists were everywhere, at least in moderate numbers, like tuberculosis germs. The truth was that ^{our government} we couldn't find any communists to speak of in the Dominican Republic at that time, much as it was desired to back up the President's assertion. I was reading the cables ^{at the time.} According to our intelligence, there were about 11 identifiable communists in the whole country. It was

a virtually communist-free environment. Still, Johnson stuck to his public account that we were protecting the Dominican Republic against communism.

After all, what other reason could he give for invading? To prevent the return of the elected president Juan Bosch, who had been ousted by a military/business coup with our blessing? That would have been true -- but less stirring, somehow.

In all these struggles against communism, we haven't had to take on the risk of fighting Russians. There weren't any Russian troops in any of those places. Except for the Berlin and Cuban confrontations, and the Chinese we met in North Korea, our troops have ~~f~~aced only indigenous forces. And when possible -- as in Guatemala in 1954, for 18 years in Vietnam, and so far in Nicaragua and El Salvador -- we have paid others to do our fighting for us. ~~Brezhnev was equally circumspect in applying his Doctrine~~

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[Item -- San Francisco Chronicle, April 10, 1984:

"Nicaragua asked the International Court of Justice yesterday to order a stop to U.S.-sponsored mining of its ports and attacks on its territory ...

"Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto ... charged that the U.S. secret war is 'nothing less than a direct assault on the international legal order and constitutes an attempt to bring international behavior back to the Stone Age concept that might makes right.'

"In its lawsuit, Nicaragua charged 'the United States is recruiting, training, arming, equipping, financing, sup-

plying and otherwise encouraging, supporting, aiding and directing military and paramilitary action in and against Nicaragua; in violation of international law, the U.N. charter and the charter of the Organization of American States.

"Nicaragua said more than 1300 of its citizens have been killed and more than \$200 million in damage to crops and physical facilities has been wrought by the U.S.-backed Contras operating in or near Nicaraguan territory....

"The United States informed the United Nations on Friday that, for the next two years, it will refuse to accept the World Court's jurisdiction on any cases arising from U.S. actions in Central America....

"Former Undersecretary of State George Ball said: 'The administration has determined that it is a law unto itself and should be able to do anything it damn well pleases, and shouldn't be inhibited by the rules of international law and the institutions we spent so much time building up.'

"Do we want to put ourselves at the level of the Russians?' Ball asked. 'I must say I think that's what we're doing. I think we're engaging in a Brezhnev Doctrine.' He compared U.S. policies toward leftist regimes in Latin America to the Soviet doctrine that it has a right to use military force to keep its neighbors in the communist fold."]

Moreover, you may have noticed, in the nearly forty years of the Cold War we have never yet actually fought Russia. We haven't killed any Russian troops. We haven't even shot at

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ABOVE

Brezhnev ^{was} ~~has~~ been equally circumspect in his application
any. Nor have Russian units engaged ours. ^ of The Doctrine.
(Return to p. 92)

Bre-15 > Noam Chomsky's analysis, which I find very persuasive in
his Towards A New Cold War, is that the Cold War has been
highly functional for both superpowers. It has provided a
legitimizing ideology for their domination of their own
spheres of influence, against challenges basically from within
those spheres. For each, the Cold War has justified bloody,
costly and dangerous "police" operations which each has found
necessary in its own sphere, against local or regional inhabi-
tants.

From this point of view, the existence of NATO has served
the Russians well. For our part, if we didn't have the Russians,
we would have had to invent them. In a sense, we have in-
vented them, as a Hitler-like entity, which is the way we want
to imagine them. That's the most useful image of the Soviet
Union for our government, especially, as now, for purposes of
justifying interventions and the policy of arming ~~to~~ rather --
-than--negotiating.

The identification of Russia with Nazi Germany under
Hitler -- the analogy Reagan relies on -- is the core of the
Cold War ideology. We must look back to the Hitler period to
see what that means, and what it has meant to us subliminally
throughout the Cold War. It asserts that we are confronting a
powerful opponent which is not only militarist, authoritarian,
and dominating its neighbors -- Russia is all that, of course
-- but expansionist in a special, unusual sense. The analogy
suggests that our opponent sees its security and its prosperity

as dependent on rapid expansion even at high risk (as in the Nazi model). It implies a leader who really is willing to see the world blow up as a result of his gambles if he loses them, and one who has his sights set on conquering most or all of the world by military force quickly, in his own lifetime. A leader, therefore, who will break any treaty as quickly as he sees a short-term interest in doing so; a regime with which there are no common interests, and with which it is useless to negotiate, with which no treaty is worth anything. You might as well not have the treaty; it means nothing. In fact, treaties and even negotiations are positively harmful; they lull and mislead into vulnerability.

All these alleged characteristics of the Soviet regime are evoked by that Hitler image. They are often stated explicitly in ^{the} "vulgar anti-Communist" *press and pulpit* and *some* speeches in Congress; and, unusually, in the Executive Branch under Reagan. But they are tacit premises underlying even sophisticated Cold War arguments that may explicitly purport to reject some parts of the analogy. That is especially true, under Reagan, of the central pessimism about the possibility of reaching useful, sustainable agreements and the desirability of even trying to do so.

That Russian leaders are strongly authoritarian and have a very large ^{armed forces} ~~army~~ is, of course, true. That they are dominating neighboring peoples is true. The other aspects of the identification have no basis in reality at all. Overall, it's a grossly misleading analogy. Could it become true under new

leaders? No doubt, just as it could become true of any country. But we are acting as if it were already true, and it is not.

Actually, when it comes to risk-taking, ~~of a certain type,~~ our own leaders are so used to having been number one for so long that they exhibit a kind of recklessness rarely characteristic of their Soviet counterparts. The Soviet leaders know that they live in a world that is inhabited by a much stronger power and that they have to tread carefully. They have faced the threat of annihilation for the last thirty years, most of that with sharply inferior capability. They are not high risk-takers. (That doesn't mean they might not make a misjudgment, of course.)

Our officials, on the other hand, have more often acted in ways which could be considered provocative and risky. For example, it is risky to send troops into areas where they could be defended only by nuclear weapons. We keep on doing so without much concern because for years it wasn't as risky for us as it is today; we were far and away number one in nuclear terms, as in every other way.

We think of our own motives as defensive: just as the Soviets do, both leaders and public. The President certainly thinks of what he is doing as defensive. Yet for the most part he does not suppose that he is defending against what he says he is defending against -- the threat of an imminent Soviet surprise attack against us. That recurrent assertion is a hoax. It's like telling the public that we dropped the Bomb so that we wouldn't have to invade Japan. It is a con-

venient, plausible, and powerfully effective lie. It has never been the case that a President has believed us in imminent danger, or foreseeable danger, of surprise attack from the Soviet Union.

What our Marines, neutron bombs, Pershings and ICBMs protect is not the continental United States. They have very little to do with that. They protect a world-wide sphere of influence -- a region of American interests, so-called vital interests. A vital interest is one that you will fight for. It has turned out that we ~~had~~ ^{have} vital interests, for example, in Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East; indeed in every part of the world up to the frontiers of Soviet control.

We have probably never had active military plans to send the Marines or the Army into Soviet-occupied countries. But we have perceived "interests" that we will protect right up to the borders of the Soviet Union. We will "defend" these U.S. interests against the desires of the local people, if necessary, and against any Soviet aid that might be given to insurgents or to rebels. ^{It is the enormous and dispersed nature of this sphere that} ~~That's what~~ leads us to rely on nuclear weapons, and the threat of first-use and escalation, more than the Soviets do.

The Soviets are defending a sphere of influence that in abstract terms is not that different from ours. Concretely, the difference is that their sphere is more compact, confined primarily to their zone of military occupation at the end of World War II. Thus, their sphere is virtually defined as that part of the world in which they have overwhelming conventional

superiority. It follows that to maintain their grip on it -- either against internal or external challenge -- Soviet leaders have no need to rely on threats or readiness to initiate nuclear warfare.

In this crucial respect, the two spheres are highly dissimilar. How did this come about? We were the ones who came out of World War II with unchallenged global superiority -- economically, financially, industrially, and militarily. So we inherited nearly everybody else's empire except the Russians'. That's basically what it came down to. We inherited predominant influence in major parts of British, Dutch, German, French, and Belgian empires. Along with many benefits, we took over the role of policeman and guarantor of Western capitalist interests. The resulting patchwork of "responsibilities," involvement, "commitments" and "interests" covered much of the globe outside the Soviet system, China, and our industrial allies (mostly former imperial powers.)

Our sphere is so vast we can't ~~actively~~ ^{against active challenges} police many parts of it at once -- that would be like a run on a bank. We can't afford to let a challenge anywhere appear so successful as to encourage others. Hence our concern about "dominos."

We fear to look like a loser, anywhere. We can't look weak. We can't let ourselves lose resources that we say we depend on, thousands of miles away. And there have always been powerful advocates of the position that the only way to defend those interests -- not just from the Russians but (more likely) from local people who might outnumber our troops -- is

to be willing to use nuclear weapons against opponents that threaten to stalemate our expeditionary force, or to overrun major elements of it.

In short, we still treat much of the world as if it were "our" Caribbean. That is a very unusual sphere of influence. It beckons us to enormous global risks; it has led us to rely on nuclear first-use threats to back up our police forces, and to pursue an arms race to make these threats credible.

We feel a need to show our willingness to protect -- by such radical means, when necessary -- even minor interests thousands of miles from our shores. By contrast, the Soviets have no distant "vital" interests comparable to the oil of the Middle East for us. Nor do they have far-flung involvements they feel compelled to defend to keep from being dangerously humiliated~~ed~~ (unless Cuba has become that by their investment of prestige). They let Chile be overthrown without getting involved. They let themselves be expelled from Egypt and a number of other countries. They have not committed themselves in Nicaragua. Neither in East Europe nor anywhere else do they have anything like the same military incentive our leaders do to rely on first-use threats or readiness.

There is reason to believe that the Russians see it as being in their interest to end the arms race, if it could be done on a mutual basis. They have no prospect of getting ahead of us technologically, or ^{of being} ~~to be~~ able to disarm our submarines of the ability to destroy their society. Their citizens know these things, contrary to what our public is

told. With enormous effort they have achieved essential parity. They are about to be outmatched technologically again, but they will work hard to regain parity if they have to. Still, with their economy 60% the size of ours, a race is an even greater burden on them than on us, and even our economy is straining under the weight of massive military expenditures. And because they don't rely on nuclear first-use threats to maintain their empire the way we do, they have less to gain than we do by building new weapons. They don't have the same need to enhance the credibility of threats to initiate nuclear war.

I wish that preventing nuclear war and reversing the arms race were absolutely at the top of the Soviets' priorities. As the other superpower, they could have immense influence on us if that were their absolutely overriding interest. Unfortunately, I think that since 1964 they have put even higher priority on achieving nuclear parity with us and maintaining it, presumably in hopes of being accepted by us as an equal superpower in several other dimensions.

Nevertheless, I do suspect the Soviets are more willing to see a mutual end to the nuclear arms race than our own leaders have ever been. Proposals the Soviets have made indicate that, and it's plausible, given their strategic position and the pressures on their much smaller economy.

Time and again, the Russians have actually proposed an end to the arms race. People haven't heard that; they hardly know it. (This despite President Reagan's false allegation

that the Soviets had invented the Freeze notion, and were prime movers behind the Freeze Campaign.) Strictly speaking, the Soviets' good faith has never been tested because no American President has come close to being willing to end the arms race.

No American President has wanted a nuclear war. But -- pressed by powerful domestic interests -- they have all guarded the ability to make credible nuclear threats. This has necessitated, in practice, our pursuit of an endless arms race. By keeping technologically ahead, and by pursuing state-of-the-art developments in "damage" limiting and in "counterforce" weaponry, we have sought to make our threats credible. No President to date has been willing to propose ending the arms race or to see it ended unless the Soviets make a kind of concession amounting to permanent, clearcut, unequivocal inferiority. This is something the Soviets have never shown any willingness to do ever since Khrushchev, whose proposals for a Comprehensive Test Ban between 1958 and 1963 would have assured us permanent superiority if we had accepted.

We have never tested the Soviets' stated willingness to halt the arms race. Their offers have never come close to being accepted. One could be cynical and say they're making offers only to look good, because they know we will reject them. Alva Myrdal in Sweden came to that conclusion in her book, The Game of Disarmament (although I think she's changed her mind more recently). I can't disprove that. The way to prove it one way or the other would be for an American Presi-

dent to be willing to seek to end the arms race, and then see if the Soviets were willing. This is the test that we want to see an American President make, by proposing a Freeze.



Q: What you've been telling us seems to indicate that the United States is almost solely responsible for the arms race and its continuation.

DE: That is no longer the case. It's true that for twenty years or so into the nuclear era, until as late as the mid-Sixties, the Soviet Union was far, far behind the United States both in the development and, even more, in the deployment of strategic weapons. Thus it bore much less responsibility for the arms race. But that has not been true for a good fifteen years or more.

It's not only that their "progress" toward parity has made them a full participant in the arms competition, with a full measure of responsibility for continuing it. There are also unilateral steps they could have taken -- for example, suspension of testing -- and bilateral restraints they could have pressed more vigorously -- for example, a mutual ban on flight testing of MIRVd missiles, to prevent MIRVing -- that would have been promising ways to achieve a mutual end to the arms race, if that had truly been their highest priority. I suspect that their leaders have responded to pressures from their military and their weapons labs too, just as ours have. For example, they may have given higher priority to getting multiple warheads themselves, eventually, than to preventing both sides from having them. If so, that was a bad mistake, the same as ours.

In general, they probably have given even higher priority

to achieving and maintaining parity in every sense with the United States than to getting the whole process stopped on both sides. That's my guess, even though I think it's true that they have shown much more interest in a mutual stop to the process than U.S. officials ever have.

{ Their openness to a mutual halt ~~if I'm right in seeing~~ it is a very hopeful aspect to the present situation. It's a necessary condition. After all, if Soviet leaders were as committed to continuing the competition as -- I'm sorry to say -- I think U.S. officials are, I wouldn't know where to look for hopeful possibilities of ending the race. There is little chance of an effective popular movement in the Soviet Union that would change the Soviet leaders' predispositions, if they needed to be changed. Fortunately, that may not be necessary. At this moment, it's the predispositions of American leaders that most need changing. It's lucky that the country whose policies are the greatest obstacle to ending the arms competition and threats of nuclear war is the country where popular pressure has the greatest chance of changing its policies. But that puts it up to us.

We don't always spend as much time as we might, in the antinuclear movement, looking critically at the contribution of the Soviet Union to the problem. There is a popular fallacy -- promoted by our government long before Reagan -- that the U.S. has been merely responding all these years to a Soviet "threat." We spend a lot of time combatting that misconception pointing out the U.S. lead and initiatives that

give it greater responsibility. I've done that here. Besides, it's U.S. policy that we can best affect, as Americans. But it is worth looking at Soviet misjudgments, omissions, and contributions to the dangers we share, if only to see all the more clearly that it really is up to us, the popular movement in the U.S. and Europe, to bring about crucial changes. We can't rely on Soviet prudence, priorities, or initiatives to be adequate to get us out of our global predicament.

The Soviet reaction in the Sixties to our threats and their crisis "defeats" seems understandable. But that doesn't mean it was wise, any more than our own policy. On the one hand, facing the threats we have made, one could say they have had every reason to build a strong deterrent force. Indeed, it is hard to say that the Soviets did not have adequate incentive to build their Bomb in the first place. Yet in retrospect, they haven't exactly improved their security by making those weapons, from the early ones to the most recent.

For example, Khrushchev probably thought he had compelling reason to test weapons dramatically in 1961, starting with a 58-megaton blast, the largest weapon yet tested (equivalent to 4,500 Hiroshima weapons). Kennedy had just made the nuclear threats over Berlin I have described, and Khrushchev knew ~~in~~ ^{know that} though the American public didn't, and

Khrushchev could guess that Kennedy wouldn't rush to tell them, lest he undermine support for the vast military buildup to which he was committed.

AA that he was facing that threat with four ICBMs in his inventory. ^{(Over twenty years later, as I have mentioned, the actual strategic}

In the fall of 1961, Khrushchev wanted all the deterrence that a brutal display of destructive power could

balance in
1960-61 has
never been
declassified.)

give him, and he wanted it fast. Yet to make this demonstration -- and to start the Soviet Union on its long missile buildup -- he was ending a moratorium on nuclear testing that had lasted three years and could have continued indefinitely.

Few Americans seem to recall that moratorium. It developed roughly like this. In 1958, Khrushchev proposed a mutual cutoff of tests; he said, "We will not test from this date forward if the U.S. will agree that they will not test." Just that. When Eisenhower refused to give such an assurance, Khrushchev then said, "All right, we're not asking for any promises. We are stopping our testing for 18 months. We will do no testing for 18 months; and we will see what the U.S. does." Whereupon Eisenhower did stop it. He too said, "We'll stop for 18 months." At the end of 18 months the U.S. said it was no longer bound by the commitment; but it didn't start testing. So Khrushchev said, "We're no longer bound either, but we won't start again so long as the West doesn't." ~~So~~ Neither the U.S. nor the Soviets tested, for three years: 1958, '59, '60. In 1960 the French tested, and the Soviets took that, rather reasonably, as a renewal by "the West," though the U.S. disclaimed any responsibility.

? { *P Kennedy was under strong pressure from Livermore and Los Alamos Laboratories, the Pentagon and some members of Congress*
~~led by Edward Teller and the Livermore Laboratory~~ to renew testing, and neither side claimed to be bound by their 1958 commitment after late 1959. So the halt might not have lasted much longer anyway. Yet Kennedy had not given in to the Labs,

and he might not have.

By starting again, Khrushchev did not even save himself from having to back down on his threat to turn over control of Western access to Berlin to East Germany by the end of the year. And it freed the U.S. to move ahead immediately with tests for the enormous U.S. program of warheads for Minuteman and Polaris missiles, a buildup surpassed in scale and intensity only by the current Carter-Reagan program. Khrushchev's decision seems a disastrous error.

The same can be said for the U.S. decisions. Neither Eisenhower nor Kennedy accepted Khrushchev's proposals in 1958 through 1963 for a comprehensive test ban, even though they joined him in a moratorium for three years. After an immense worldwide protest movement against atmospheric testing induced a mutual halt to that in 1963, the U.S. insisted on continuing tests underground. (Kennedy even promised to accelerate the pace of testing, as a concession to the testing lobby -- in the Pentagon, weapons labs and Congress -- to reduce their opposition to the Partial Test Ban Treaty). So we tested and produced lots of new weapons designed by Livermore and Los Alamos Laboratories. But the price was steep: it included 1,400 ICBMs based on Soviet territory, instead of almost none.

In 1968 we were five years ahead of the Soviets in our ability to ^{test}~~put~~ multiple warheads -- MIRVs -- on our missiles. In that year or the next -- the first years, as it happened, of close nuclear parity between the two powers -- both build-ups could have been stopped and parity maintained indefinitely

by a mutual halt of the flight testing of ballistic missiles.

Flight testing of missiles was, then as now, fully and reliably verifiable by both sides with "national means of surveillance": the satellite photographic, electronic and infrared reconnaissance each side maintains. Without such testing there would have been no multiple warheads on either side. (It is these warheads that are the source of current concerns about vulnerability and instability.) Given Brezhnev's determination not to be left behind technologically or quantitatively, such a halt would have had to be negotiated before we began deploying; and probably before testing, which we started in 1968, had gone very far. But neither Johnson nor Nixon (despite urging in Congress) ever proposed such a ban. Neither wanted to find out if the Soviets might have accepted it.

Each pursued the short-run superiority that MIRVing promised. We got it, temporarily. In 1970 we began installing MIRVs and soon we had doubled the number of warheads threatening Soviet targets (increasing our numerical superiority over Soviet warheads from 2 to 1 in 1970 to almost 4 to 1 a few years later). And with a five-year lag, the Soviets tested MIRVs and then deployed them. The net result: the 1,400 Soviet land-based missiles we now face are armed with 5,000 warheads. (And they can carry many more, if the Soviets abandon the SALT-II restraints that President Reagan refuses to ratify.)

But even that doesn't convey how dangerous the situation

is becoming, or how urgent. If all that ^{had happened over the} ~~was happening today,~~
~~last ten years and the prospect for the next five ten~~
~~and over the last ten years,~~ was the multiplication on both
sides of, say, Poseidon warheads, our problems would be far
less acute than they are. There would still be serious issues
of waste of resources, of proliferation, of possible accidents
and unauthorized action, and the moral dilemma of relying on
deterrence at all. But the world would not be becoming
markedly more dangerous -- as in fact, it is. Nor would our
danger be increasing at the rapid pace -- and threatening
irreversibility -- in the way that truly defines our current
situation as a crisis. I doubt I would be spending my time as
I do, in virtually full-time efforts seeking ways to brake the
momentum of the current process in the very short run.

Poseidon and Trident I warheads, on submarines, are in-
vulnerable to attack; and they are too small and inaccurate to
attack land-based missiles in hardened silos. In a crisis,
they do not press their possessor to use them quickly --
either lest he lose them under attack or in order to disarm
his opponent. Nor do they contribute to either of these
motives for preemptive firing on the part of the opponent.
This is not to say that the world needs more Poseidon war-
heads, or as many as the thousands we now have. It is simply
to say that adding such weapons does not make the world more
dangerous -- less "stable" -- in these crucial ways during a
crisis, when expectations of imminent war or escalation begin
to rise.

All this is reversed for highly accurate, land-based

warheads that are vulnerable to attack. And that is what both sides have been buying, over nearly a decade, with large new deployments just ahead. The process started, as usual, in the U.S.; ~~and~~ as usual, that fact has been obscured, denied, and reversed in government propaganda. But that origin is less important than the fact that the Soviet Union has joined the process, generating a strong, dangerous interaction. Unless we act soon to change it, the interaction may become effectively unstoppable for a prolonged period, during which our risks will be increasing steadily.

The U.S. Mark 12A warhead with an NS-20 guidance system was the first weapon on either side to have the combination of yield and high accuracy to be a useful "silo-buster," threatening a counterforce attack on missiles in superhardened silos. The U.S. began testing it in the mid-Seventies -- just as the Soviet Union was beginning to introduce MIRVs on less accurate missiles -- and began installing it on Minuteman III missiles in 1977. In that same year, well ahead of U.S. predictions, the Soviets began testing a missile guidance system with comparable accuracy. This they began to install on their MIRVd SS-18 missile in 1981.

This Soviet development, from '77 on, is the basis for what Reagan and the Committee for Present Danger have described as the "window of vulnerability." By ignoring the ^{U.S. deployment of the} prior_^ advanced Minuteman III and falsely claiming that the Soviets had initiated silo-threatening, first-strike capabilities, both the Carter and Reagan Administrations deliberately

made the Soviet development look more ominous, building U.S. public support for various programs including the MX as alleged "responses" to this "new" ² "threat."

The new SS-18 warheads for the first time do give the Soviets some incentive to "preempt": ^{to} strike first if they thought that otherwise we might strike to disarm them. ~~They still couldn't attack our submarine missiles, which are the bulk of our force. But they could be tempted to attack what they could destroy -- our fixed, land-based missiles, especially the Minuteman III and the coming MX that threaten their own force.~~

← Earlier, or without this development, they would have had no incentive to strike first even if they were almost certain they were about to be attacked, since they had no ability to "limit damage" to themselves by destroying any major part of our own forces. For the same reason, we would then have had little reason to fear that the Soviets were about to strike, or even to escalate in an ongoing war. And without that fear, it is hard to imagine a U.S. President launching a strategic attack himself, even in the heat of a war. Without a reasonable basis for such fear, it would be hard even to make his threat credible that he might do such a thing. Since ^{their} 1977 ~~testing~~ and in ~~particular~~ ^{simply by matching the prior U.S. "progress" in missile accuracy,} since 1981, ^{deployments} the Soviets have at last supplied a basis for that fear. They deserve no congratulations for this.

We are even reinforcing the basis for our own fears in a crisis, by our expanding efforts to make all Soviet silos

vulnerable to attack, sharpening their fear of our preemption. (The more reason they have to believe that they might shortly lose their own ^{land-based} missiles, the more pressure on them to "use" them, promptly.) There aren't currently enough Mark 12A warheads on Minuteman missiles -- nor do they have enough range -- to threaten the entire Soviet land-based missile force.

which carries three-quarters of ^{all Soviet strategic} their warheads That is the function of the MX missile -- each of which will carry ten Mark 12A's or more advanced warheads -- along with the Trident II, which will be the first sub-launched missile to have the extreme accuracy to be a counterforce, "silo-busting" weapon. The MX -- Reagan's "Peacekeeper" -- and the Trident II (now designated the D-5) are first-strike weapons, designed purely to destroy Soviet missiles in their hardened silos before those missiles have been launched.

Eventually -- sometime in the 1990s -- enough D-5 missiles are planned to threaten the entire Soviet ICBM force with no-warning attack, since the submarines can be brought in to launch at relatively short range. The Trident submarine armed with the D-5 missile -- now under development, scheduled ^{to begin} ~~for~~ deployment by the end of the decade -- has been called "the ultimate first-strike weapon."

Because it will be invulnerable to attack, the public has been led to believe, wrongly, that ^{Trident II (D-5)} ~~it~~ will be stabilizing, or not as destabilizing as the MX. Therefore it has had almost no opposition in Congress. Congresspersons who have voted against MX have even proclaimed their enthusiasm for Trident

II (D-5), to show that they are not "knee-jerk disarmers." They are misguided. In a hot confrontation when the Soviets had reason to believe that we might soon strike, the capability of the Trident II to disarm the Soviets if they waited too long to launch their own missiles would add to existing pressures on the Soviets to preempt. (That would especially be true precisely under the current Reagan Administration programs, which plan "only" 100 MX missiles and make an effective U.S. disarming attack partly dependent on ^{deploying} Trident II.) Although the Soviets couldn't target the Trident II itself, its existence and the threat it poses would contribute powerfully to Soviet incentives ^{in a crisis} to use their missiles -- before losing them -- to attack what they could, including Minuteman III, MX and Pershing II.

The MX will be in fixed silos, which means that it can be destroyed by the SS-18. So it is not a "retaliatory" weapon at all. It is a "first-strike only" weapon, which gives the Soviets even further reason to fear and target it. It does not contribute to deterrence of attack on the U.S. On the contrary: in a crisis it would act as a "lightning rod" to Soviet preemptive attack, lessening our deterrence and increasing the danger of all-out nuclear war.

The new Pershing II intermediate-range missile being deployed in Germany has similar "lightning rod" characteristics and consequences (as the Germans have noticed). It is even more accurate than the MX or D-5. It is the only ballistic missile in the world today with terminal guidance, homing

in to land within 30 yards of its target. Being forward-based, it has a very short flight-time, reaching Soviet targets in 6 to 12 minutes. It threatens Moscow and other major command posts with what the Pentagon calls "decapitation," the destruction of hardened command and control facilities with the aim of paralyzing Soviet response.

Since such an attack would come too quickly to plan high-level human response to radar warning, the prospect presses the Soviets strongly to delegate the capacity to respond to lower-level, widely decentralized commanders, or even to computers, automating the response to radar warning. Such an automated "launch-on-warning" system has been designed and prepared in the United States, in face of the Soviet counterforce capabilities. The pressure on the Soviets to install it would be measurably increased when the Pershing II is later joined by the MX and Trident II.

The dangers to all of delegating decision-making have been sufficiently dramatized by the mistaken shootdown of the Korean airliner by the Soviet air-defense command. An automated response system plays Russian roulette with the world. In one 18-month period, the U.S. alert warning system had 147 false alarms, four of which lasted several minutes -- or half the flight time of a Pershing II. Russian officials have stated that at some point the Soviet Union will institute an automated "launch-on-warning" system when the Pershing IIs are deployed. That announcement has the ring of a suicide note. Signed in the name of humanity.

Q: A lot of the things we read insist that if we saw a large-scale attack coming, we would sit tight and wait and absorb it first, before retaliating. ~~Could we be certain that an attack was coming in time to launch our own ICBMs?~~

DE: ~~The question is this:~~ Have we always had ^{the} policy that we would not launch our nuclear weapons until the opponent's weapons had actually exploded on our territory? The Pentagon has often issued statements that suggest this, ^{Sometimes they mention} mentioning that ^{mentioning} we "must" be "prepared" to absorb the attack. They say that's why our weapons "must" be survivable. ^(The "must" is highly misleading; major new weapons the Pentagon is demanding like the MX are not survivable in the absence of warning.) ~~That's true, since we might not get adequate warning, and our weapons shouldn't rely~~ on it in order to survive and thus to be able to deter.

^{But} Sometimes they go further to state that our policy requires us to ride out the attack before retaliating. That last assertion is a flat lie. That has never been our policy. After all, our NATO policy has committed to launching our full strategic attack, "if necessary," in the face of massive non-nuclear Soviet attack, or as an escalation of tactical nuclear conflict. ^{And} If we were close enough to being sure that the Soviets were about to strike the U.S., Air Force doctrine dictates that we should immediately seek to "take the initiative." We would get our weapons off as early as possible, in order to destroy as many of their weapons as possible. Even though some Soviet weapons might have been launched by that point, it's realistic to assume that they won't all go off simultaneously. So even if radar indicates that Soviet mis-

siles are on the way, the faster we launch our missiles, the better our chance to destroy some portion of the weapons that have not yet been launched, thereby "reducing damage."

Of course, it's true that this capability offers very little promise, if any, of reducing damage to our population to any measurable degree, in an era of such large forces. Realistically, the whole notion of "damage limitation" has become a dangerous anachronism. Yet the temptation of exploiting the new super-accuracy of missiles -- and restoring the credibility of our threats -- has kept it alive in the Pentagon and the weapons labs.

Q: How long does it take to mount a launch?

DE: The Minutemen can be launched within a couple of minutes. The Poseidons can be launched ^{equally} ~~very~~ quickly, although delays in communicating with them would usually mean they would not be available that fast. But all the land-based missiles can get off very fast, ^{Those are among} ~~That's one of~~ the major arguments given to Congress for the MX and the Pershing II. ^{and in contrast} ~~Compared~~ to bombers, they can be sure of "penetrating". ~~and~~ This may be an aspect of what Helen Caldicott calls "missile envy.") They have what the Pentagon calls a "prompt hard-target kill capability."

Most of the alert planes can get off with 10 minutes' warning. In a crisis, even more of them are on alert, so nearly all of them could get off in 10 minutes or less. Airplanes can get up into the air immediately and then await

further confirmation of a full attack before they launch their weapons.

But missiles can't be called back. Once they are launched, they go all the way. That takes about 30 minutes from launch for most ICBMs. Six to twelve minutes for the Pershing II, or sub-launched missiles if they are fired close to their targets in a first strike. Installing the Pershings in Germany gives the explosives that mine all our homes a six-minute fuse.



Q: At the current levels of weapons on both sides, could there really be much temptation ^{to} of "preempt," given the amount of retaliation you would have to expect anyway?

DE: If the alternative to striking first is ^{fighting} an ordinary war, or even losing an ordinary war, or almost anything you can name -- other than being struck first by the other side -- it would not seem worth it to use strategic nuclear arms, given the certainty of devastating retaliation. But military leaders would evaluate the advantage of initiating a preemptive strike in the context of a much more desperate alternative: going first versus going second. Such a comparison does not require that you come out well, to motivate going first. It doesn't even require -- ^{in order} to choose preemption -- that you expect to come out better than catastrophically. It just requires you to believe that there are distinguishable levels of catastrophe. In the horrendous circumstances when an enemy attack may be imminent, underway or likely to begin, the catastrophe associated with going first -- destroying many of the opponent's weapons before they can be launched -- may seem preferable to the catastrophe of waiting and going second after absorbing the opponent's full, undamaged blow. There will be military men who will see that difference, both in the Pentagon and the Soviet Union. That's all it takes to motivate a preemptive strike.

The greater the difference you perceive in the outcomes of striking first and striking second, the less certain you

have to be that an enemy strike is on the way or coming soon, to motivate your own preemptive strike. So anything that works to increase that calculated difference for you has a "destabilizing" effect on both sides. (Your opponent's fear is increased that you will respond to warning or expectations of a given degree of uncertainty by preempting.)

Installing vulnerable counterforce weapons like the MX and the Pershing II on one side increases the calculated difference between striking first and second on both sides. In a crisis, the very existence of such weapons can cause a reinforcing interaction of fears. When both sides have such weapons -- as they now do -- the interaction is even stronger. But other sorts of measures can have the same consequences. A number of civil defense measures, like evacuation, and virtually all anti-ballistic missile defenses -- including the new Star Wars types -- will "work," if at all, much more effectively in connection with a first strike. ~~As they~~ Thus they increase the difference in expected outcome between striking first and second. Almost every program Reagan is pursuing has this destabilizing aspect.

Q: But Reagan says he's pursuing stability.

DE: Reagan has had that word thrown at him by arms-controllers criticizing all his new weapons, so he's just giving it back to them. If "stability" is "good," if that's what the public wants, why, that's what his products offer. He's sincere, I'm

sure, but he's got his fingers crossed behind his back. He's using the word in a very special, private sense, very different from the technical meaning it has always had in arms control discussions.

He says his new weapons -- including his new Star War proposals -- serve stability. They do in the following sense: They will make the Russians, he hopes, more likely to back down in crises, so we are less likely to be challenged. Therefore, fewer crises; the world is more "stable." But if his weapons programs have that effect at all -- and they might, to some extent -- they do so by telling the Russians and the rest of the world that if they don't back down, we shoot the works: ~ in part, for fear that if we don't, they will. It all blows, everything goes. It's out of our control.

In other words, our forces will help "stabilize" the world of conflict, precisely because they are highly unstable -- ^{in the usual sense,} likely to explode -- if ^{the} Soviets should allow a major crisis to arise. We can only hope, then, that the Soviets have enough control over events -- including self-control and control over their allies and clients -- to keep this from happening.

It's not easy to think of a social process analogous to this "stability of instability" (as Richard Betts has called it). It's an unusual coercive process, the threat of totally annihilating the world through one's own loss of control.

The best analogy I have been able to invent is this.

Imagine that people in a movie theater see the sign "Please don't smoke" on the screen. As the sign appears, the lights go up, and the ushers ^{are seen} start pouring gasoline down the aisles. Then the sign says, "We really mean it. Do not smoke. It's very important."

This should work pretty well. [Laughter] There would surely be less smoking. You would feel relatively secure in the knowledge that you probably weren't going to be bothered by smoke during the movie. But you would also have to sit there hoping that no smoker had been in the men's room when the sign was flashed, missing the usher's little demonstration. You would have to hope that no one would compulsively light up a cigarette, by reflex, at some scary moment in the movie. If that happens, of course, everything blows. Everyone burns.

That's the kind of world we live in. American initiatives have led every step of the way in creating such a hair-trigger world, but we have been joined -- especially in the last fifteen years -- by the Soviet Union. They are producing pretty much the same kind of weapons as we are. They can now say, in effect, "You ain't the only ones anymore who may blow the world up if things get too hot. Two can play at that game." Maybe that's why they bought these weapons -- vulnerable, accurate, first-strike missiles like the latest model of their SS-18, or the SS-20 -- so they could make the same sorts of threats, of escalation or preemption in a crisis. Not a very good reason: no different, or better, than our reason

for buying the advanced Minuteman III, the MX, or the Pershing II. Whatever the motives, the latest Soviet moves are definitely part of ^{the} our problem, humanity's problem of surviving.

Somebody at the Livermore action showed me a sign he had made: "How does it feel to be in a plane with two rival sets of hijackers?"

I'll tell you how it feels to me.

In 1961 I had looked at plans to destroy half a billion people in a preemptive strike, and I thought to myself that this was the kind of plan that would be the end of the human species. This is how it would happen.

But at that time there really was just one superpower; ~~the U.S.~~ ^{the U.S.} had little basis for imagining that ~~there was~~ we were called on to preempt. It has probably been true since about 1960 -- when the Soviets ~~had little reason~~

had a massive threat against Europe, though not yet against the U.S. -- that ^{a preemptive motive is necessary to get} ~~there is only one way you can get~~ any President

to push that strategic, all-out button, and that is if he

^{some} ~~has~~ ^{perhaps} ~~in addition to any other pressure, such as major war in Europe or the Middle East~~ ^{must have} ~~has~~ reason to believe that the other side might push it first.

I felt easy in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis, because I felt pretty confident that the Russians wouldn't strike first. Therefore we wouldn't. Because the Russians did not have much, ^{in strategic forces.} Above all, they had no way to disarm even a large part of our strike force. Now they do.

It is not true, as most people think, that we have tested the world's ability to live with nuclear weapons on both sides -- of the kind that now exist -- ^{over} for 30 years. In just the last couple of years since 1981, we have come into a whole new era. For the first time, both sides threaten large parts of

each other's retaliatory forces with large numbers of vulnerable, highly accurate weapons, first-strike weapons. We are both wired for nuclear war on an increasingly delicate hair-trigger.

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pic
Patricia Ellsberg

Dan said that this felt like coming home. It does; and I don't quite know why. I wasn't brought up in Colorado or New Mexico. I think it's because I've never felt so whole as with a fusion of the spiritual and the political -- such as is taking place here. It used to be that those two were absolutely separate in my life; it was almost like a kind of schizophrenia. The political is so full of the dark and the hideous; and the spiritual is so full of light and love. Those two realities seemed absolutely opposing. Yet I was wedded to both: to the political, in my marriage to Dan; and deeply in my own nature, to the spiritual.

After the trial Dan said, "Where should we go? We've lived my life for 4 years; it's your turn now." So I said San Francisco, to learn to meditate and to explore spiritual disciplines. I diligently went out to get a PhD in transpersonal psychology.

I never finished the PhD; I got pregnant instead (not that they were in conflict but it seemed so at the time). It was very heavy, being pregnant, then nursing a new miracle, and listening to the realities we've heard here. The word that would describe the sensation I felt was "suffocated." I hadn't yet learned, as Ram Dass suggests, to breathe deeply while taking in information about the dark side. I would cry when Dan would speak about these dark things. I would be nursing Michael; and I would ask Dan to stop speaking. I

think I had the secret hope that if he would stop talking about it, the problem would go away.

It wasn't until the last couple of years, with the anti-nuclear movement growing, that I found a place to become active. Early on, it was Dan talking mainly to me; there was almost no audience for him, let alone for me who was not an expert. Now, with many people awakening to the situation it's easier to feel that I can do something. And the miracle of it is that I'm becoming more and more whole in the process of becoming more and more involved. I didn't plan it that way; it's not why I am doing it. But it's happening. I think it's because those two parts of myself that were so split are becoming one.

I've been active in the Freeze. The national coordinator of the Freeze is Randy Kehler, a true Gandhian. He calls it a "mass movement of the heart." When last I saw him, he had just returned from a press conference in Washington. He said, "I got up there; and, in front of the press, I talked about love. It was unheard of. I said that this is a movement of hope, of love -- of love not just for our own children but love for the Russian children." He had the courage to say that in front of the Washington press corps. So it's a movement of courage, too.

As you may know, we just got out of the jail three weeks ago for blockading the gates of Livermore Lab, interfering with business as usual -- designing nuclear weapons. It was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. It's hard

to believe one would find this in jail; but it was an experience of unconditional love. I was trying to figure out why, why was that? I think it was partly the beauty of the women there. They were open-hearted, filled with love. We also had times of anger and indignation, but it was mainly an experience of love. It was a transpersonal love, a love gained from a shared commitment and a sacrifice of one's comforts for a higher purpose.

I was surrounded by earth mothers, very powerful women. We would sometimes gather for ritual ceremonies. Imagine the scene: the full moon coming up, the sun setting. It's the summer solstice; 500 women circling, bending down to the earth and feeling its power, reaching up to the stars and weaving in and out. We were all going in single file and we ended up facing each other while moving, so each of us got to look in the eyes of the other, one after the other, always singing. Filled with a sense of unity and power, we did a ritual under the full moon to break the deadlock, the injustices of the system and the nuclear arms race.

The next day we got the first break in the trial, the first change in the sentencing. The judge reduced the bail.

pic shot of hand gestures

I want to talk a little about the special role that women can play and are playing. I believe it to be deeply true that women live in a subtly different moral universe from men.

Carol Gilligan, a professor at Harvard, has written a wonderful book called In a Different Voice. She has developed useful "male" skills; she is analytically persuasive. What she is basically saying is that women in this culture tend to see the world, the moral universe, differently from men. We place much higher value in interconnectedness, interdependency, caring, and nurturing. As a general rule, men more commonly value abstract principles of fairness and justice. Traditionally, emphasis on interdependency has been seen as inferior because the models of developmental psychology have been put forward and explicated by men who have seen abstract fairness as superior to a kind of interdependency. But Gilligan says that women are half the population, different but equal. Our values are exactly what the world so desperately needs now: a sense of common humanity; a sense of interrelatedness rather than competition, and an unwillingness to hurt and to kill to get one's way, an unwillingness to allow all life to be extinguished.

Polls show that there is a gender gap. Women care more about issues of war and peace than men do. Maybe we are more linked to the nurturance of our children, more closely linked to the earth. Our egos are not involved in being number one. We get less economic benefit from the war economy; and we bear the greater costs. Whatever the reasons, these differences are of the utmost significance to the world situation today.

Nuclear weapons are the product of male minds. They are designed, created, developed, deployed and maintained by men.

As I see it, the male mentality of abstraction, of domination over nature, has led to many benefits but has become aberrant because it is so abstracted, so out of touch with the context of caring for humanity. It's these wonderful qualities of brilliance and scientific genius gone mad.

What we need more than anything now is a balancing, a pulling back of that untempered male brilliance -- not a denial of it, not a rejection of it totally, but a tempering. In the early days of the feminist movement there was a separatist feeling, which is still there sometimes, a strong feeling that the men have really made a mess of things, and it's up to us women to make it better.

I don't see it quite that way. We must attain a balance in both. We need powerful women and gentle men. Both are important, not just women, and certainly no longer just the male mentality cut off from the sense of humanity and love. Women have had more opportunity to experience interconnectedness in the world and to express love. We've done the overwhelming proportion of child care. Right or wrong, it's been that way. We have become more professional, but often in the helping professions -- nursing, teaching, schooling. The men have had to do the protecting, the fighting. The realms of love and power have become separate.

What is needed now is powerful lovingness and loving power. The nuclear issue gives us that opportunity, because if we don't learn to cooperate we are going to die. Not since ancient times has there been a time when the feminine tenden-

cies were so necessary for our very survival. As I've begun to study the nuclear issue it's not only been with a feeling of despair and negativity, although the dangers are much worse than I thought. I've also found enormous hope and a sense of positive possibilities. I don't know about the rest of you; but I was brought up believing that we needed nuclear weapons to be safe. I think most Americans were. I had a particularly bizarre education in this, because my father was a very charismatic man, who by a total fluke met a lot of men who later became the great U.S. Generals of World War II. They were close friends. My younger brothers had as godfathers Generals Eisenhower, Bradley, Marshall, Curtis LeMay (who headed the Strategic Air Command,) Al Grunther (head of NATO,) and "Drop-the-Bomb" O'Donnell (who led the raids over Tokyo). I grew up on the knee of Curtis LeMay and General O'Donnell. When I was about to marry Dan (this was when Dan was still in good standing at Rand, before he put out the Pentagon Papers), Dad wanted to show us off and invite his General friends to our wedding. When it came to Curtis LeMay, Dan said that was fine, only if Curtis LeMay did come, Dan wouldn't!

But throughout that time I was brought up with the idea that nuclear weapons made the world safe for democracy and protected us against the possibility of World War III. My father said that because it would be suicidal for either country to use nuclear weapons, there would be no more full-scale wars.

Only in the last few years, as I began to study the issue myself, have I realized nuclear weapons were not built to defend us against nuclear attacks -- which is the only possible justification for their existence. We expanded our arsenal when we had a monopoly and then an overwhelming superiority, not to protect ourselves, but to maintain an empire. We substituted nuclear power for manpower in areas far from our shores, and have greatly increased the likelihood of nuclear war by threatening to use nuclear weapons first, in non-nuclear crises.

The good news is that to deter nuclear attack we need only a small fraction of what we already have. You can argue with the morality of deterrence -- of saying "we'll strike back and destroy your ~~con~~try if you attack us." But even if one accepts that principle, we need only a small survivable retaliating force -- two or three Poseidon submarines are sufficient -- to be able to threaten the total devastation of Soviet society.

Common sense tells us what world leaders seem to be the last to realize: we don't need any more weapons. Their use would be suicidal. Nuclear weapons have created a new real-politik. Either we learn to live together or we will die together. What we do to others we do to ourselves. The ancient spiritual truth -- that we are one -- has become the new political reality. And the money we spend on death can be spent on life. Imagine what we could do if we liberated the defense budget for creative and compassionate purposes.

In the next ten years our country is planning to spend a trillion and a half dollars for "defense," and perhaps an additional 50% of that vast amount, or \$750 billion in cost overruns alone. By conservative estimate we could save \$500 billion in the next five years by not building weapons that in ~~fact~~^{fact} make us less secure. What could we do with that money? Every minute I speak, 30 children die of starvation, throughout the world, while more than 1 million dollars is spent on arms. It would take twenty billion dollars a year for the next 15 years to end starvation in the world. A vast amount. Yet that's what is spent on world armaments in about two weeks. Not only could we help end starvation, but if we spent the money allocated for the MX on energy conservation, our country could become up to 75% less dependent on the oil that we are about ready to blow up the world for.

What could the world could be like, if we didn't hold on to our empire with this enormously costly, coercive, risky use of force? What if we instead used our energies and our talent to carry out the founding principles of our country; that all people have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? What if our policy stemmed from the basis of mutual security -- and not from power projection and coercion?

It will take a mass movement of the heart to bring this about. And I feel great, great hope. We are more powerful than we know. In this movement profound integrations are taking place. Tremendous wellsprings of energy and power are released as we become whole. We as women are claiming our

power, speaking out strongly from our hearts and our guts and the passion of our being. We will not let our children die senselessly and meaninglessly. We will not let them be burned alive. We are like mother lionesses with our cubs under attack. And as we are finding our strength in this movement, men are becoming more sensitive.

We are connecting the mind with the heart. That's what each of us has to do. When Ram Dass asks that women teach us by speaking from their hearts, let us remember to come from the mind and the heart. We do need enough solid information to be persuasive. But let us never allow the information to overshadow our hearts, because that is where our strength is greatest.

What we need is a new foreign policy in which strength is based on mutual security, not threats of genocidal suicide. We need a new world view in which not just natural resources and cheap labor and markets are protected, but people, children and the earth matter. Let us arrive at a new definition of "vital interest" which includes the right to stay alive and enjoy a healthy and beautiful enviroment.

There is no dichotomy between healing ourselves and healing the planet. The two go together. We are healing ourselves as we heal the planet. And as we heal the planet we heal ourselves.



O: How do you keep up your hope?

DE: I believe, not just as a matter of faith, that we have a chance. This is my optimism. Still, it's no easy matter to face the despair that challenges everyone who looks squarely at the problem.

It makes a lot of difference to your spirits to be doing something politically -- something that you feel, in your heart, has some bearing, some possible relevance. This kind of activity has a big effect on your strength, your hope. My son Michael is an example. He's six years old. Pat and I were concerned as to how Michael was holding up, with us both in jail following civil disobedience at Livermore Lab, one of two facilities where all U.S. nuclear weapons have been designed. We received a report at the end of the first week, from the friend that was taking care of him, that he was "starting to droop."

A community action at the Lab was planned for the next day, Saturday. We had been wondering how much support we had, since the press had been emphasizing how much it was costing the county to keep us in jail. (They weren't mentioning how much Livermore was costing the people -- especially what they were risking! -- by designing first-strike weapons, or what the cost was of continuing with the MX.) A "Hands Around the Lab" event, which we thought might bring out only a handful of people on a sweltering afternoon, drew six thousand people. They made a circle around Livermore Lab. The Catholic Arch-

diocese made 800 life-size paper effigies with the names of each one of us still imprisoned in Santa Rita, five days after the arrest.

Our son Michael was part of that chain. He had made his own sign, which he had designed himself. At the bottom it said, "NO MX, NO NUKES." And the top read, "FREE MOMMY AND DADDY." From that point on, we heard, he felt fine because he was doing something helpful. I pass this on to you.

Michael's sign
Parent 

Q: How do people inside the weapons labs explain to themselves what they're doing? How do they justify their work?

DE: I had a dialogue recently with a high official of the Livermore Laboratories. He was the first one who agreed to my frequent requests that we meet for lunch and talk.

Toward the end of the lunch, he said to me, "The difference between us is whether you think it's more important for you to be alive or free." (You know, the "better dead or red" thing.) This man designs U.S. thermonuclear weapons. He said, "That's the difference between you and me." And I said, "No, that's not the difference."

I said to him, ^{very soberly,} "First, that's not an issue. I'm a little older than you; and I've had occasion in many periods of my life to discover there were things I would die for. I found lots of things; I was prepared to give my life in the Marines, or later, in Vietnam. And still later, when others were demonstrating their willingness to risk life or liberty to oppose what our country was doing in Vietnam, I was willing to give my life for what I believed was right. I thought it likely that I would be, not dead, but in prison for the rest of my life. Would I give my life to preserve American freedom? Yes, that is one of the things I would give my life for. And there are others -- lots of others." I said to him, "You know, you or I might give our lives this afternoon saving somebody on the street, right outside here."

"The question really is this: 'For what would I partici-

pate in killing ten to a hundred million people? For what cause would I massacre; indiscriminately?' That's the question this country is facing. That's the issue before us. The answer can't be, 'For freedom.' That's not going to preserve 'freedom,' for anyone."

I would be happy to see Congress cut off Livermore Lab's nuclear design work, on the grounds that we've got way too many warheads, whatever the Soviets do. The Livermore Action Group is trying to send this message to the scientists, with increasing success.

The first arrest at Livermore in February 1982 caught the attention of those scientists. Three or four years of other, "legal" activities had little perceptible impact, until the civil disobedience. For the first time, discussions were sparked inside the Labs on whether or not the demonstrators had a point. Of course, the majority thought not, but nonetheless, useful discussions were stimulated. As a result, a few Livermore scientists have in effect joined the Freeze movement. This has caused great controversy within Livermore. It's a very important and promising development.

Q: What kind of civil disobedience did you do?

DE: We sat in front of the gates to prevent them from entering to design nuclear weapons. 200 people willing to go to jail.

In subsequent actions, 1,000, then ultimately, 1,600 arrests were made. The head of Livermore's public relations quit his job and joined the Freeze campaign.

Q: That's how Bishop Mathiesson in Texas began his work. He wondered who those crazy kids were who were jumping over the fence.

DE: Actually, Mathiesson's "conversion" came from talking to a fellow priest who was in jail for going over the fence at the Pentex plant, where all our nuclear weapons are assembled. It was someone from the same background who got through to him.

The name of the man at Livermore is Bill Perry. He designed the whole P.R. campaign -- a very effective one. What changed him? Partly he went to hear Helen Caldicott to see what she was saying, and she in essence converted him. He also had gotten videos of my speeches to train his people ("know the enemy"), and he said that my videos got through to him as well. He not only left Livermore, but he began speaking out against the nuclear build-up, joined the California Freeze campaign, and has had a significant impact.

That's one of those dream things that you hope for: a "change of heart" by an insider.

Given what he says about Livermore, however, we can't expect to "convert" all the lab workers. You are talking to people who are getting their information from the President.

Everything in their lives disposes them to believe what the President is telling them, not what we are saying -- however factual we appear to be. Their careers depend on it.

I know from my acquaintances in the physics division at Rand that designing weapons doesn't have a whole lot of prospects of conversion to peaceful projects. You might think it did. But guys who work on these bombs have told me that there just isn't much of a market for people who have been doing what they have been doing for 20 years -- designing efficient implosion mechanisms for thermonuclear weapons. We are trying, with some hopeful prospects, to explore the conversion problem. Of course, that is much easier for workers performing less highly skilled functions. The lower talents are convertible, but the top people, on the whole, really aren't.

Nuclear scientists were held in high esteem after the Manhattan Project. They still think of themselves the way the country thought of atomic scientists in 1946. They have basically held on to that self-image, although the country doesn't laud them in the same way as before.

These are not the guys to count on mobilizing. One, two, three top-level people may come over to your ranks, and many at lower levels, all to good effect. But you are asking those top-level people to admit that they are at the heart of the problem. If what they did was wrong at all, it was fantastically wrong. So they are deeply invested in believing otherwise.

Most of them manage to believe, and they do believe with

good conscience, that they are working only on deterrent weapons. Many of their wives have been saying for 20 years that they should get out of this "devil's work." And they have responded, "You don't understand. This is very important work; I'm saving the world from nuclear war." It's very hard for them to go against what the President is telling them, which is that these weapons are for deterrence. They want to believe it. They need to believe it. So they do believe it. If we were in that same position, we might believe it too.

So you present the evidence to them. You say, "How can you say that the MX in a fixed silo is a retaliatory weapon?" I've gone through this with the head of the weapons division. "Is it going to survive to retaliate if the Russians hit us? How does that deter a Russian attack? Don't you know that the MX was scheduled for a fixed silo from the beginning?" And he said, "Well, that was in a period when the Russian accuracy wasn't as good, so the fixed silo wasn't so vulnerable."

"All right," I say, "how come it's being put in a fixed silo now?"

"They made a mistake."

Well, there are questions of inference here. In effect, I'm offering the scientist the unpleasant hypothesis that he is the one who made a mistake, in thinking he was designing a second-strike, retaliatory weapon, and that that was what the Pentagon wanted. I'm suggesting that Reagan, on the contrary, accepted the "need" for a first-strike weapon and didn't want to spend the money to make it look invulnerable by making it

mobile. In other words, I'm suggesting that from Reagan's point of view, the fixed-silo basing mode is no mistake. But it's up to the scientist to draw his own conclusions. It's a lot easier for him just to say, "I was designing a retaliatory weapon. I think they should have put it in an invulnerable basing mode. If anybody ever asks me, I'll tell them to put it in a better mode. I don't make first-strike weapons."

That's how it was with me on the first-strike plans. I ask myself now, "How could I have managed to see these things as 'deterrent' plans for so long?" It's hard to understand, 20 years later. I can give reasons, I can point to things that misled me. But still, weren't there clues that I could have followed up if I had wanted to look a little harder? The answer is, I didn't want to believe that I was working on first-strike plans.



I mentioned earlier that Gandhi, I thought, had made an invention -- a social, political invention. I emphasize that not to give him a credit in the history books, but to hold up some hope that I gleaned from seeing that his methods have not been tried over and over for thousands of years, failing to stop wars and injustice. Something new is going on, virtually in our lifetime. It has been tried only partially, on a very limited scale. Its possibilities are not to be measured by the state of the world today. It is still evolving. It is not a finished product.

~~Some people felt discouraged during our civil disobedience~~
action ^{Colorado} (at Rocky Flats in Boulder, in 1978). ⁷ Some of you were there, [✓] sitting on the tracks stopping with your bodies the departing trains bearing radioactive wastes from the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Production Facility. *Let me tell the others about it.*

^{Rocky Flats makes}
They make all the triggers for nuclear weapons, which --
^{I've said --}
as you know from the other night -- are Nagasaki-type bombs. They produce the plutonium components of A-bombs.

^{early}
In ¹⁹⁷⁸ I saw the neutron bomb coming. Carter was deciding whether to go with production of it and Rocky Flats was going to produce the main components. I saw that as one of those turning points that makes the whole thing less reversible.

It's too usable. It makes too likely that small nuclear wars will happen; and the big wars will come later. I really wanted to stop that, ~~weapon~~ ^{from coming into existence}.

So we sat on the tracks to stop the train. As long as they were unwilling to run over you, you stopped the arms race just by sitting there, because the plant couldn't operate, the triggers could not be made, the bombs could not be made. In fact, stockpile weapons deteriorate because of their radioactivity and Rocky Flats renews and retools them. So long as we hindered their operations, the stockpile would actually go down at a steady rate. Marvelous. Just by sitting there, you could stop and reverse the arms race. Unless they arrested you.

Well, of course, they did arrest us. But our action helped make the people of Denver, of Colorado, aware of what Rocky Flats did. They learned about the dangers it posed for the people of the immediate area and for all life on earth. They did not know these things before. When we started, I found that nearly everyone who had heard of Rocky Flats at all thought that it generated "nuclear power," the "peaceful" kind -- not the power, as I informed them, to end life on earth.

Knowing this, they began to find ways to act. People ran for office on the platform of closing Rocky Flats. The Rocky Mountain Daily News and the Denver Post shifted their positions, saying Rocky Flats must close. People haven't yet found a way for the state to take the initiative to close the plant, since it is part of a powerful Federal institution.

Still, ways are being invented. For one thing, the governor has for the first time instituted a study of the health effects, cancer incidences, the effects on the environment, so people would begin to know what human price is being paid to operate the plant.

This all was catalyzed, in part, by our doing exactly what we were charged with in our arrest files -- "obstructing the normal operations of the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Production Facility." During the arraignment for my first trial there, the judge wanted to give me a higher bail than the local people (people without local occupations had to pay bail instead of being released on their own recognizance). I said to the judge, "But I do have an occupation here in Colorado." And he said, "Oh, what is your occupation?"

And I said, "Obstructing the normal operations of the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons plant. And I expect to be doing it for quite a while."

It seemed like useful work. So we kept at it. That began to irritate and puzzle the local judge. After my third arrest -- my son Robert and I had celebrated the first birthday of my baby son Michael Gabriel by getting arrested together on the tracks -- the judge had us brought up to his chambers from our cell. He had the guard remove our handcuffs; then he offered us tea, and said he wanted to understand why we were still going out on the tracks. After all, he said, we "had made our point"; we would get our day in court, with the press present. We explained that the plant was still producing

nuclear weapons; we wanted to stop that. "But you don't stop production," the judge said. "The trains always get through."

"Not without arrests." Not, any more, invisibly; not smoothly, on time, without effort or reflection on the part of the officials. Not without public question, controversy, challenge. Not, anymore, with the presumed consent of all American citizens.

A day earlier, as we were being driven to jail, handcuffed next to each other in the police van, Robert had looked out at the railroad tracks we were passing and said to me, "You know, there should have been some Germans on the tracks at Auschwitz."

Later when he came before the judge for sentencing (after fasting on water for sixteen days, nine spent in solitary confinement) Robert told the court: "There is a group of people -- someday they will be thanked, now they are jailed -- who are saying, 'Build your bombs, continue your business as usual in this death camp -- but I'm sorry that I must withdraw my consent -- you will have to do it over our bodies.' They are saying, 'No longer should nuclear ^{weapons} bombs be made in this country without Americans being arrested opposing it.'"

What these Americans were doing -- I knew from my own life, from the effect that the draft resistance of young men during the Vietnam war had had on my own conscience -- had the power to raise the question in the minds of other people: "What could I do to obstruct the normal operations of Rocky

Flats?" When enough people are led to ask themselves that question, and act on it -- ~~brought the Congress and the President, eventually, to respond~~ -- Rocky Flats would close.

So we felt we were on the right track, and we kept coming back to it. As public awareness rose and press coverage became increasingly sympathetic, the authorities began to be reluctant to arrest us. Sometimes it seemed that we could not get arrested ^{any more} just sitting there. Days would pass with no arrests. So blockaders would say, "Let's go up to the gate, and climb over if necessary."

The officials in the production facility had begun to say, "These people are very nice. They are very non-violent. We really have no complaint to make against them so long as we are not using the railroad that day. There's no problem ... unless they come up to our fence. If they did that, we would have to kill them." So these civil disobedience people said, "Well, if that's what it takes to get a reaction, let's go up to the fence and call their bluff."

I said that I thought we had a really strategic location there. We were on the tracks. The train could not pass. We really were stopping the train. I said, "We don't have to go up to the gate. We don't have to go anywhere. We just have to sit here." And that's what we did.

Meanwhile, I was very concerned that my one-year-old son Michael would start walking while I was away. He crawled a lot, but he hadn't walked yet and I really wanted to see that first step and I hated to think I might miss it. So I would

call home all the time when we weren't on the tracks and Patricia would ask what we were doing and what was happening and I would say, "We're just sitting." Then I would ask, "Has Michael walked yet?" and Patricia answered at one point, "No. Like his daddy, he's still just sitting."

But another time she asked me whether the action had evolved in any way, and I told her about the people who wanted to make things a little more dramatic, by going up to the gates and challenging them to shoot us. I told her my opinion that we were right where we should be, not threatening anybody. "That's the power of the action," I said. "All we need to do is sit."

Pat said, "You sound like Baker-Roshi" -- a friend of ours, the abbot of the San Francisco Zen Center. Zen Buddhists call meditation "sitting." I said, "That's right. 'Sitting is reality, sitting is power, sitting is all you have to do.' But I think that Gandhi's extension of Buddhism is that it does make a difference where you sit." [Laughter]



(pic)

When I actually saw the MX go off I was surprised by something I had never seen before. How many people here have actually seen a rocket firing? Two people. Well, I had seen missile launches on TV but had never seen one "live," if that's the right word. What startled me when I watched at Vandenberg was that I could see the whole vapor trail. The TV camera always focuses on the missile alone, the most interesting object. Within the TV frame, you only see the little flame behind it and a short stream of vapor. I never realized that that vapor trail goes all the way across the sky. It remains in the air for hours, long after the missile is out of sight. It eventually begins to curl, and, in the light of sunset the ionization path glows brilliantly. (A missile launch ionizes the atmosphere and creates an effect like the Northern Lights.)

It was an eerie effect, fabulously beautiful. The sky was wreathed in green and purple and violet and yellow light. This means that after a war -- this was a war missile, a first-strike missile -- the sky will be very beautiful.

7 Just before this test, we were all standing around -- most of us had been arrested, some were from the support group -- at the gate outside Vandenberg Air Force Base. We were talking rather exuberantly; it had been a good day, a good action. Suddenly a CBS cameraman came back and took me aside. "We just got word that they are going to shoot this thing off in a

couple of minutes." So we turned around. And it went off, this great firework. ~~just before the Fourth of July.~~

The week earlier, while I was lobbying in Washington, I had been fretting that I was going to miss this first launch. I knew people were standing by near Vandenberg hour by hour, waiting for an indication that it was time to try to block the launch, and I really wanted to be with them. But everyone in Washington had kept telling me, "That's not going to go off this week. Are you kidding? They are not going to fire that off one week before the authorization vote." However, it was fired, and I think it was done then for one reason. That little fireworks display ~~for Fourth of July~~ was to tell the legislators when they came back from ^{the recess} recess, "This is a reality that you cannot reverse." ^{the holiday}

Within 20 minutes of us seeing that thing lift off, it landed in Kwajalein Atoll, 4,000 miles away. It was accurate. It landed in the lagoon. The idea was to say, "This is a reality. It works. No missile that works has ever been stopped. Forget fighting it. Accept it. Go on from here. Don't fight the President on this one. He has it; it is here. It is not just a plan anymore." That was the purpose of that test.

Our purpose was to tell Congress; It's not an unquestioned, unchangeable reality. It was what my son Robert and I said to the judge, when he asked why we kept sitting on the tracks at Rocky Flats. We said, "To show that there are Americans who say that to keep this going, you have got to do

it over our bodies."

Many Americans are coming to feel the same way. The military buildup is not proceeding without resistance. As my son had said to me, "There should have been Germans on the tracks at Auschwitz. And there weren't. But there should be Americans on these tracks. And there are."

So, we wanted the Congress to know that this was not unchallenged. We were saying by our presence on the base, by getting arrested, "If you Congresspersons are willing to resist the President, you will have many Americans behind you, supporting you." That's why we were there.

The CBS reporters were doing interviews. They were posing the absolutely typical question they ask every ~~weeping~~ ^{family} mother after an earthquake ^{has destroyed their home:} "How do you feel about this?" Actually most of the people were weeping hysterically. I wasn't. I realized that some of them were first-timers at an action who had really believed we were going to stop the MX launch. My immediate reaction was, well, we delayed it by several hours, maybe; or else the weather had. That was all I had expected. That was my immediate feeling. But then my reaction turned into something else,

I was beginning to realize, in my gut, what we were watching. This was not a space shuttle. It wasn't even a Poseidon weapon, an inaccurate and relatively small warhead suitable only for retaliation. This was a first-strike warhead, nothing else. *This is the one that ^{could} ~~with~~ do it to us.*

150

The test missile had a red tip, which I thought maybe was red hot metal, or else red paint; but it was very, very vivid red and the missile body was white, the sky blue, the vapor trail white. I felt this was all part of the Fourth of July. Red, White and Blue. Spectacular, going up. And the vapor trail was this endless long thing. It went all the way across the sky. It filled the whole sky. That will happen, too, after the war. Not just one. There will be thousands of vapor trails for hours, on both sides. Very beautiful.

So the CBS guy asked me, "How do you feel?" Well I was feeling a little less hard-boiled by this time; but I did not want to show them. I just pointed to the vapor trail and I said: "Look at it."

The missile goes up and the vapor trail goes up straight at first. And then it tilts rather abruptly, it doesn't curve gradually. It shifts direction for the main part of its trajectory, it makes almost a ninety-degree turn to the left, heading toward Kwajalein, a big left turn in the sky.

But by the time I was pointing, minutes after it had gone off, the wind had blown the vertical part, bulging it over toward the right. It curved this part, and it looked just like this: [gesturing] an immense question mark, covering the whole sky. So I just said, "Look at it. It's a question mark."

Then I said, "And the question it asks" -- and I began to cry; I hadn't expected to -- "and the question it's asking is, 'Is this what it has all come to? Is this the end?'"

And I said, "It's asking us, 'Are the machines totally in control? Is this unstoppable -- even by Congress, even by the President, even by the people, the human species? Is there no stopping this?'"

I said, "The truth is...the machines can ask the question. They cannot answer it. Only the human species can answer it. It is up to us to answer it." And then I went off and sat down with the others and cried a lot.

So that is the challenge to us.